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Rose Rinder

MUSIC, PRAYER AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP
Temple Emanu-El, 1913-1969

With an Introduction by

Rabbi Louis I. Newman

An Interview Conducted by
Malca Chall

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Cantor and Mrs. Rinder at the time of their Golden Wedding Anniversary - 1964.
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INTRODUCTION

No one is better equipped to present the story of the career of her distinguished and beloved husband than Mrs. Reuben R. Rinder, or, as she is affectionately known, Rowie. The history which she has prepared gives not only the biography of a personality, but also furnishes the chronicles of an entire era. It was my privilege to partake of the friendship of Cantor Rinder of Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco, from the time he was selected by the late Rabbi Martin A. Meyer, in 1913, until his death in 1966. I recall, too, when the young cantor went East to marry the lovely Rose Perlmutter--in the 63rd and Lexington Avenue Temple of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, in New York City. From the moment of her arrival in San Francisco and ever since, Rowie Rinder has awakened only the greatest affection and admiration of everyone who came to know her. She has not only been the wife and helpmeet of a ministrant in Jewish religious life, but she has also participated vitally and creatively in Jewish community activities in California, displaying great versatility and skill. It is fitting, therefore, that she should tell the story of Rob Rinder, as she recalls it over the five decades of their life together.

Cantor Rinder was a unique and remarkable personality. He possessed great magnetism, and came to occupy a central position not only in the affairs of the congregation, but of the entire community of California, and in the world of music. He had great adaptability, and remained cantor of the congregation during the ministry of four rabbis. Whatever the environing winds of opinion, Rob Rinder preserved his own integrity of viewpoint, being a Zionist long before it was popular to espouse the cause of a Jewish State in Palestine. He cooperated with personalities and movements within American and world Jewish life which represented a deep and authentic Jewish outlook. One of the most fascinating experiences of my six years as rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, between 1924 and 1930, was the production of S. Ansky-Rappaport's folk-play, The Dybbuk, for the direction of which the illustrious founder of Habimah, Nahum Zemach, came to San Francisco to direct our Temple Players. It was Cantor Rinder who directed the music which the great composer, Engel, had written for The Dybbuk, thereby greatly enhancing the production.

As hazzan or cantor of the congregation, he was responsible for the order of music at religious services, and in happy cooperation with his organists and the members of the Temple choir, he made the liturgical music for the Sabbath, High Holyday and other services notable in every way. Not only in the revered Temple building on Sutter Street near Powell, but also in the superb Levantine edifice of Emanu-El on Arguello Boulevard and Lake Street, erected in 1925-1926, Cantor Rinder maintained standards of synagogue music unrivalled throughout the country.

Rob Rinder was also a creative and original influence in the domain of religious music. Because of his great popularity with the congregants of Emanu-El, he was able to gather the funds necessary to commission renowned composers of the era to write music for the Prayer Book. Through Cantor Rinder's energy and devotion, he made it possible to invite men of established reputation to turn their talents to synagogue works--among them, Frederick Jacobi, Ernest Bloch, Darius Milhaud, Marc Lavry, and Paul Ben-Haim. Their writings are utilized continuously in the synagogues of America, and the Avodat ha-Kodesh of Ernest Bloch has gained deserved immortality. Rob Rinder acted upon the dictum in the Zohar: "There are halls in Heaven that open only to melody."

The forty-fifth anniversary of Cantor Rinder's musical ministry in Congregation Emanu-El brought a gathering to the Temple which filled its handsome auditorium to capacity. Selections were presented from the several services which Cantor Rinder had commissioned, thereby indicating the scope of his inspiration and influence. In the Apocrypha, the passage which begins, "Let us now praise famous men, by whom the Lord hath wrought great glory," contains the words: "Wise were their words in their instruction: such as sought out musical tunes, and set forth verses in writing." Rob Rinder was one who sought out musical tunes, and he has made us all his debtors. We are, therefore, confident that the recollections of his life and accomplishments, recorded by his devoted and gifted wife and companion of the years, will be welcomed by everyone who praises and prizes famous men "by whom the Lord hath wrought great glory."

Rabbi Louis I. Newman

May 27, 1970
Congregation Rodeph Sholom
New York, New York

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Research and Planning

On June 17, 1968, the Regional Oral History Office sent a formal letter to Mrs. Rinder requesting her agreement to be interviewed. On September 5, Mrs. Rinder met with the interviewer to consider the details of the project and to come to grips with apprehensions about tape recording her memories of the fifty years she and Cantor Rinder had been actively associated with Temple Emanu-El. Mrs. Rinder recognized the importance of her husband both to the religious and secular community, but was unable to see how anything she had to say about these years would be important to anyone.

The hesitancy finally overcome, Mrs. Rinder and I began the series of interviews. After two sessions she went East to visit her son and his family, and when she returned was unexpectedly ill. In March, we began again and soon, concerns allayed, she was enjoying the stimulation of the interview sessions.

While looking for material in scrapbooks which she knew were in the house, Mrs. Rinder was surprised to find folders of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, telegrams, letters, musical programs, and photographs which the Cantor had carefully filed and stored away for many years. She had been unaware of the existence of much of this treasured memorabilia, which will now be given to the Western Jewish History Center of the Magnes Museum to enrich that developing depository.

A few close friends and colleagues of the Rinders provided essential background and insight for the interviews. It was a privilege to share the memories of Marshall Kuhn, Rabbi Alvin Fine, and Ludwig Altman. Mr. Altman, demonstrating a keen sense of history as well as a deep devotion to Cantor Rinder, held our conference in Cantor Rinder's study (then still unoccupied) so that the interviewer, seated at the Cantor's desk in his old, heavily upholstered chair, could get a feeling for this unique person and his place in Temple Emanu-El. When we ended our discussion, Mr. Altman led me through the choir loft, down the back stairs and out the door through which the Cantor usually left when he was going home -- about a block from the Temple.

A chance meeting with Rabbi Louis I. Newman, in February, 1969, when, on a rare visit to the Bay Area he was the guest of honor at a tea in the Magnes Museum, paved the way for correspondence through which he sent background notes for use in the interviews, and ultimately agreed to write the introduction.

Time and Setting of the Interviews

Mrs. Rinder taped eleven interviews on the following dates: September 26 and October 3, 1968; March 10, March 26, March 31, April 10, April 18, April 28, May 5, May 12, May 19, 1969.

We taped in the bright and comfortable study-sitting room at the back of the house at 3877 Jackson where the Rinders had lived most of their married life. From the windows we could see the commanding presence of the dome of Temple Emanu-El. Taping was always preceeded by a short social visit, during which Mrs. Rinder graciously served coffee and sweet rolls. Once we had matzo meal pancakes in the dining room to commemorate the last day of Pesach. Formal interviewing began about 11:00 and finished at noon, because Mrs. Rinder usually had afternoon appointments.

Shortly after the final interview she moved to an apartment. This was a difficult period since the old family home was a repository of so many memories -- of children and family life, seders, music and musicians, gatherings of community leaders -- all of which we had striven to capture in the interviews. In the new home the atmosphere of comfort and beauty prevails as it did in the old. Here in the new setting are the grand piano, the small organ, the books, the portrait of Cantor Rinder painted by Werner Phipps, and the other paintings, etchings, and furnishings carefully selected through the years, all helping to create a feeling of continuity with the past.

Conduct of the Interview

At our preliminary conference in September, 1968, prior to the first taping, Mrs. Rinder and I agreed on the broad general outline for the interviews. While it is customary to provide the interviewee with an outline of the specific material to be covered at each session, I felt, given her apprehension, her exceptionally good memory, and her excellent command of language, that I could get the information just as well if only I had an outline. As she continued to find material tucked away in bookshelves and windowseats, my outlines developed greater scope. Since she had looked through the folders too, Mrs. Rinder needed no further prodding. Her voice was clear and strong, demonstrating the kind of dramatic style one might expect from a person who has been writing skits for years.

Editing and Completion of Manuscript

The interviewer edited the transcriptions and is responsible for arranging the material into chapters and for devising the chapter headings and subheadings. On August 2, 1969, Mrs. Rinder received the edited transcript.

She was asked to answer several additional questions, and to make whatever additions, corrections, or deletions she considered necessary to insure the accuracy of the final manuscript.

Her reaction to this transcript was typical of that of most writers when faced with the results of the taped interview: she was appalled by the style of the interview and by what she conceived as its lack of depth. I tried to assure her that the interview is never the definitive statement only an additional primary source for use by writers and historians, that interviews are not literature -- sometimes they are not even literate. She was not entirely satisfied until I gave her a few excerpts from a talk by Alfred Knopf explaining his very similar reaction to the transcript of his interview with Professor Louis Starr of the Columbia University Oral History Project.

Mrs. Rinder returned the manuscript in late January, 1970, her editing having been interrupted by the time needed to recuperate from a broken hip caused by a fall in her apartment during the summer of 1969. In January, 1971 we were conferring again, this time to choose samples of the many letters clippings, photographs, and programs we wanted to place in the manuscript, both to enrich it and to provide the reader with an appreciation of the kind of material which the Cantor had saved for future scholars.

Mrs. Rinder decided to put the document under seal but at the same time to permit it to be used for research prior to January, 1973, with her special permission. She was motivated in the decision by a desire to document honestly the past half century of life as she and the Cantor knew it, and at the same time by the sincere desire not to slight or injure any of the many people with whom she had associated during these years. Needless to say, after three and one-half years of close association, Mrs. Rinder and the interviewer have become very good friends.

Malca Chall
Interviewer

30 June 1971
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California
Berkeley, California

I CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION: ROSE RINDER AND CANTOR REUBEN RINDER

Mrs. Rose Rinder

Chall: First I'd like to find out all we can about you, and then when we get to the point where you came here as a married young lady (must have been quite young) we can talk about your husband. After that, we'll go into your lives together in San Francisco. So what we want to do is to get the backgrounds of each of you prior to your coming here.

Can you tell me first where and when you were born and something about your family?

Rinder: Oh yes. I was twenty-one when I came here. I was just seventy-five last week.

Chall: Oh my, it doesn't show.

Rinder: Oh, my dear!

Chall: It really doesn't.

Rinder: But this wrinkled face--of course, I've had it for twenty-five years. It's the kind of face that wrinkles, that's all.

Early Life in a Shtetl

Chall: Now, where were you born seventy-five years ago?

Rinder: I was born in Rozvedov, which was then in Austria. Interestingly enough, I noticed the other day, after the invasion of the Russian tanks into Czechoslovakia, that the tanks withdrew after a few

Rinder: days (I saw that on television) into Rozvedov. Therefore, this is now part of Czechoslovakia. You see, when I was born there was no Czechoslovakia. But I always state, when I'm asked, that I was born in Austria because that was Austria at the time.

Chall: Was this a very small community, what we'd call a shtetl?

Rinder: Yes, a shtetl. I didn't think it existed any longer until I heard it mentioned on T.V. That was my father's home town. My mother came from Dzikov, in approximately the same neighborhood, within a few miles.

Chall: I see. And what did your father do in Rozvedov?

Rinder: He had a candle factory. I can remember going to the factory with him and seeing the machine with the wicks in the holes the size and shape of candles, and I could see the men pouring tallow into those containers. I found that very interesting; it's one of the things that remain with me.

I remember also a fire one night, when we were all awakened and got dressed and sat outdoors until sunrise. I can just see us sitting there. Half the little town was burnt down.

It was pretty much of a Jewish town because I can't remember any Christians there except the servants. That was not a shtetl in the sense that the Polish shtetls were, or the Russian. It was quite a little town. Then I remember my grandmother and my uncles and aunts preparing to go to America. I remember them polishing the brass and the copper to take with them. I can see them doing that, but I remember nothing else. I've tried to recall certain things. Those are the few things that stand out.

Chall: Your father, I presume, was a man of substance, because he had his own business.

Rinder: Yes.

Chall: Were there any Christians working in the community?

Rinder: Well, perhaps the laborers were Christian. That I don't recall. I know servants around the house, people who came in--shabbos, goyim, they were called--were Christian, so there must have been some around. But they weren't predominant in the community as

Rinder: they were in some of the other cities.

I have to show you a picture. This is a photograph of my father. Isn't he handsome? And that's my mother.

Chall: Those are old pictures. Your father is dressed with the beard and the yarmulkah, like any self-respecting Jew of the time.

Rinder: He was Orthodox, of course.

Chall: What kind of orthodoxy was prevalent there? Was it part of the Chasidic movement?

Rinder: Yes, I would say he was a Chasid, because there were only Chasidim in both these towns.

The next thing that happened was that my father left for America. His family sent for him.

Chall: Then first the grandparents left?

Rinder: First the grandmother, there was no father, and his two brothers and two sisters.

Chall: Unmarried?

Rinder: Unmarried, all of them. They went first, and they sent money for my father's transportation. Apparently the business wasn't doing too well. It was a little town, and I don't think anybody was too well off. Some were more comfortable than others. We never were in want, but I suppose my parents felt that they could do better in America. So when his family sent for my father, he went to America first, and my mother, my brother, and two sisters, one very tiny then, and I went to Dzikov to live with my maternal grandmother.

That town I remember a little better. My grandmother's home was on the square. There was a market square in the town which at the time seemed huge to me--which today I would probably find one block square.

Chall: Dzikov must have been a bigger town than Rozvidov?

Rinder: Not necessarily, but I remember the market place because once a week the peasants would come to town. They would set up tents, and when I got up in the morning I could see all the tents. They would bring their cattle, their pigs and chickens to sell, and I could hear them. What I remember most are the beads, the red coral beads, some round, some cut coral beads, and little earrings.

Rinder: We all had our ears pierced in those days; mine still are. And there were dolls, bisque dolls, one of which I had for many years.

We found that very exciting. That happened once a week--I forget now whether it was Wednesday or Thursday--and they were there all day. And toward evening they'd fold up their tents like the Arabs and silently steal away. And that would be the end of Christians in my life. I saw no others. We lived there a very short time, about a year, and then my father sent for us, and we came to America.

Chall: You were how old?

Rinder: I must have been about eight or nine. There were four children, and they came in quick succession.

Chall: Where were you?

Rinder: I was the oldest. I think I was about nine years old.

Chall: I presume your language was Yiddish.

Rinder: Yiddish, yes.

Chall: So you went over with your family at the age of nine, and all of you spoke Yiddish?

Rinder: Yes, we all spoke Yiddish. But the language in the schools in Dzikov was Polish. That I don't recall, and I'm surprised that I don't, because I should have learned more than I did.

Chall: More Polish?

Rinder: More Polish. In Rozvedov, I went to cheder only because I was too young for secular school. But in Dzikov, I was old enough to be in the first grade before I came to America and my teachers were Christian.

Oh, there is one thing I recall during this period in Dzikov which I think is really very interesting. One Saturday, around noon, a group of people passed our home, and we all went to the door to see what was going on. We learned that a young woman had just been to the rabbi (who was the important person in the community) to have a dybbuk exorcised. She was holding up her little finger, which was swollen and through which the dybbuk was supposed to have escaped. I recall that. I had completely forgotten it until we performed The Dybbuk at the Temple House at Temple Emanu-El, when Rabbi Newman was here. And then it came back to me. So you see, these people really believed in "dybbuking."

Chall: Oh yes. And you came from a community where this was just part of the normal life of the community.

Rinder: Part of the life; of course, that's right. I remember also when the rabbi's son was married and he was to bring home his bride. Every window in the little town had a candle burning in honor of his home-coming.

Chall: Do you recall how you reacted to this idea of the dybbuk?

Rinder: It was one of the things I took for granted. It happened and it was interesting to see. I had never seen it before and never certainly thereafter.

Coming to America

Chall: When you came to this country, did your maternal grandmother come with you?

Rinder: No, my grandmother remained. She was comfortably off; she lived in her own home.

Chall: But it was just the paternal side that came to America?

Rinder: Yes. I suppose my uncles and aunts must have helped my father because he was able to send for us very shortly thereafter. We went to America, but I recall very little of the journey. I remember we stopped in some private home--possibly it was a boarding house--somewhere on the way after we got off the train. And then we took a boat.

You know, when you come from a little town, you're not aware of things. I know that my great-grandchild of three-and-a-half today would be more aware of things happening and changes than I was in those days. You know, you're insulated in a little town, no television set, no radio, no nothing. We led a very quiet, simple life, no contacts with any outsiders.

Chall: Where did you enter the United States?

Rinder: We came to New York, Castle Garden. That was the entrance port in those days, and the whole family was there to receive us. I remember my sisters and I wore navy blue sailor suits with little navy blue tam o'shanters and red pompons.

Chall: Well!

Rinder: Yes, we were dressed very well.

Chall: You weren't like the peasants who came over in the hold of a ship.

Rinder: No, no. But we came to live on the East Side, where all the immigrants lived, on Rivington Street. The family had furnished an apartment completely, but completely. Every last thing was there. And my grandmother who lived across the street with her unmarried sons and daughters had a fine meal prepared for us. We had our first meal there. So you see we weren't like the usual immigrants who came penniless and homeless. We had all that.

New York's First Dairy Restaurant

Rinder: My father at the time had a little jewelry business, oh just a hole-in-the-wall, but a little business there around the East Side and that for a time he managed somehow. But it didn't go too well, and they decided they had to do something more important. My father was a scholar more than a businessman, as most of the men were, but my mother was the doer.

She was a wonderful cook, and she decided since that was the one thing she knew how to do, that they would open a restaurant. And they opened really the first dairy restaurant on the East Side, on Stanton Street opposite a little park. Almost from the beginning, it did marvelously well. We were closed on Saturdays, of course, and towards sundown a line would form a block long, waiting for the doors to open.

We children all helped at first, and my mother did the cooking. But shortly thereafter, within a few months, they did so well that she was able to employ help--dishwashers and a cook whom she taught--but she was always around, seeing after things. And the most wonderful food you can imagine! To this day I still remember it. I have since tried many of the dishes, trying to recall (I wasn't particularly interested in those days) how they tasted and trying to concoct them, like mushroom soup, mushroom and barley soup, and borsht.

Chall: And blintzes?

Rinder: No, no blintzes, but she baked marvelous yeast dough cakes and

Rinder: rolls and things. The only pity of it was that they had no idea how to estimate the cost as against the price they ought to charge, and they charged so little it was pathetic. I mean, a man could get away for fifteen or twenty cents with a wonderful meal. Perhaps in those days that was sufficient. Money was scarce and certainly a dollar was worth a dollar. However, they did pretty well, because soon they began buying real estate.

I remember my father taking me to Brooklyn and Brownsville when he would go to collect the rents. I'd dress up in my very best. After all, I was going with the landlord to collect the rents. Instead of getting somebody else to collect them, my father would do it himself.

Chall: What was the name of your family's restaurant?

Rinder: Perlmutter's Dairy Restaurant.

Chall: I never did get your family name, your father's name.

Rinder: My father was Morris Perlmutter. And my mother's name was Dvora, like Deborah, Kanarick. You know what a kanarick is?

Chall: No.

Rinder: A canary. That was her maiden name.

Chall: Did she shave her hair and wear a shaytl?

Rinder: Originally, when she came to America, but afterwards she discarded the shaytl as soon as her hair grew out. Thank God for that, yes.

We all got her coloring. There's one in every related family around with light eyes and black hair. I didn't get the black hair, but my daughter has her eyes, my granddaughter has her eyes, and I probably have, but I have the light, mousey hair, light brown.

My father was the good-looking member of the family. He was very handsome. Both parents' eyes were blue, so that there are no brown eyes in the family, which is unusual, you know. And I always felt that somebody in that family had cheated because my father certainly, in spite of his beard, never looked Jewish. He had the most beautiful features, the perfect nose, as you can see, and blue eyes. And when he turned grey and looked blondish, he looked like a real goy, really.

Getting an Education

Rinder: Now, in the meantime, I was attending school, of course, and learning English. There was a public library on Houston Street opposite this little park, across from where we lived, and I began reading books. At first I didn't understand a thing I was reading, but I persisted and was soon reading a book a week, then two and three. I think I finally read every book in that library. I'd say I owe my intellectual bent, if any, to Mr. Carnegie in whose library I spent so much of my youth. I would take home four or five books and go through them and just continue reading until all hours of the night. And also, of course, I began to learn the English language in school, and I did pretty well, and things went along swimmingly.

Also, we used to permit posters advertising plays to be put up in the window of the restaurant, and we were given tickets, for this permission, to the Yiddish theater. My first experience in attending the theater was in the Yiddish theater.

Chall: Do you remember anybody in it?

Rinder: Oh yes, Tomashevsky and Adler, somebody named Adler, but I don't remember anybody else.

Chall: Was your family still speaking Yiddish at home?

Rinder: Yes, most of the time they did. When I graduated from school, I went on to the Washington Irving High School for only two years, and then I transferred--for no reason except that some of my friends were going there--to the Hebrew Technical School. Do you know New York at all?

Chall: I know New York, but I've never heard of the Hebrew Technical School.

Rinder: It was privately endowed. The Hebrew Technical School was on Second Avenue, corner of Fifteenth Street. It was semi-private. I went there for two years. It approximated a high school education because we got English and French, music appreciation, and various other subjects. But besides that, we were given a business course in bookkeeping and shorthand.

Interestingly enough, I could understand philosophy and psychology and math (I was good in math) and any science, but these little marks just meant nothing to me. I used to marvel: the girls who usually got C and D in the other subjects went ahead swimmingly and I barely passed. And to this day I just cannot learn those subjects.

Chall: Was this a girls' school or was it coeducational?

Rinder: No, just girls. That's where I learned to swim; they had a swimming pool. It was a beautiful place. I know we paid some tuition. Unfortunately, I was never influenced in those days by any teacher to suggest that I go to college.

Chall: That really was not part of life--the expectations for the girls at least.

Rinder: No, not part of the life around me, nor did any of my friends attend college. After they graduated from technical school or high school, they went on to a job.

Working

Chall: And that's what you thought you would do?

Rinder: No. My parents preferred to have us at home and to help somewhat with certain things we could do around the restaurant.

Chall: So your parents, once they started the restaurant business, just kept on? That was their source of income.

Rinder: Yes.

Chall: Meanwhile, apparently your mother had more children. Did you say there were seven of you altogether?

Rinder: Yes. Three boys were born here in rapid succession.

Chall: And she still kept working in the restaurant?

Rinder: Well, she didn't work, but she was around. She loved it; you know, it was her life. She was around to supervise.

Chall: Then the three sisters would have been useful at home.

Rinder: Yes, yes. After a while I got very bored with all that, so I did have one job for about a year, as a matter of fact, with a marshall, a city marshall. I finally quit because I couldn't stand it. People who couldn't pay rent would be evicted by order of the marshal. I would sometimes, on my way home, see the furniture on the street and there the evicted family would be sitting, with a

Rinder: plate out for people to drop some money into. Oh, it was tragic. And that I couldn't take, so I quit, to the relief of my parents.

It was during that period and somewhat before that too that I met my future husband. A friend of mine introduced me to him. He then had a position in a little synagogue in Brooklyn. That was his first synagogue, where he frequently had to pinch-hit as rabbi; he was cantor; he was janitor; he got there early to stoke the furnace or the stove to heat the synagogue. I'll come to him later.

Chall: So after graduation from high school you really stayed at home and helped take care of the family, the younger brothers and sisters?

Rinder: Most of the time I'd help take care of the family and help a little in the restaurant if there was anything to do that I could do.

Chall: And your father--was he primarily taking care of property, or did he help in the restaurant?

Rinder: Well, he was the cashier. He just sat at the cash register. I was nineteen or twenty then, when I was seeing my future husband, and it was shortly thereafter that he was offered this position in San Francisco. He came to ask whether, if he accepted, I would go to San Francisco. He had a very good position in New York by that time at B'nai Jeshurun, the largest and oldest Conservative temple. I was rather thrilled at the thought of going to San Francisco. Even then, it was the mecca for everybody, to go out to California.

Chall: Oh, is that so?

Rinder: Oh, yes. Well, he went on for a trial service, and was accepted. Ten months later he returned, and we were married.

Chall: What was the date of your wedding?

Rinder: June 30, 1914.

Life on the East Side

Chall: Could we back up for a few minutes and see if we can get a picture of the East Side? Now your family would be considered prosperous on the East Side. You had a business, and you were all going to school, and your father was dabbling already in real

Chall: estate, which showed quite a forward look, as if he'd really become established.

Rinder: Yes.

Pioneer Zionists and Other Organizations

Chall: But there were people around you who were being evicted and I'm sure were struggling.

Rinder: Yes. Oh, there was great poverty, of course, but it was a very exciting place and time. I remember in grammar school during a recess, a young girl came up to me and said, "Would you like to join a Zionist organization?"

I said, "What's that?" So she proceeded to tell me what a Zionist organization was, and I said, "Oh yes? I'd love it."

So we formed a little group called the Stars of Zion. The young girl who came to me was Rose Luria, who later became Rose Halpern, one of the most important women Zionists in the country. You may remember she went to the top. She became an orator. She's still around doing wonderful things for Israel. Rose Halpern--she became the first president of the Stars of Zion, and she was so nervous when she conducted the first meeting that she burst into tears and ran out of the room.

Chall: Oh really? [Laughter] How many of you were in the meeting?

Rinder: Well, there were a dozen or so.

Chall: She's come a long way. What were you planning to do, you Stars?

Rinder: God knows! We just sat around and we talked about Palestine and a future home for Jews. All Zionist groups met in one of the buildings in our neighborhood. Now I forget where it was or anything about it, but I remember that is where we met too. And of course, from then on I was a Zionist, up to today. It was really quite interesting.

The place, the East Side, was teeming with people and with activities. There was so much going on, it was exciting. I remember I would come home for lunch every day, and I would be excited as I turned the corner, expecting something very interesting to happen every

Rinder: time I got home because it was in the air, you know. So much was going on.

There is the difference between ghettos today and the ghetto then because people were working toward things. They had ambition; they were studying. The young men I knew were all attending college, working in the daytime and attending college at night. Everybody wanted an education; everybody wanted something better for themselves or for their children. There were Socialist vereins and organizations. Everything was being organized.

I remember later when we moved onto Second Avenue, for instance (the restaurant remained where it was and we moved to Second Avenue) which was then considered the Fifth Avenue of the Lower East Side. It was a wide street--there were trees along the streets then, and we had a very handsome apartment in a two-apartment place. I could hear, early in the morning, the thousands of feet--just feet marching, marching, marching to work. Everybody walked. I remember I walked to school. It was blocks away. Today I wouldn't dream of walking that distance.

Nobody thought of taking streetcars. They were there--horse-drawn cars were there--but few thought of taking them; we walked. We just walked wherever we went, which was good for us, I think. I'm benefiting today from those walks because I'm so well. I think that was my inspiration more than anything else. I used to write poetry, such as it was, but more so than my other friends.

Meeting Reuben Rinder

Rinder: I think my very interest in books and music and the theater . . . I suppose that's what attracted my husband to me more than to the other girls. He lived in Brooklyn at the time with his brother. Interestingly enough, the girl who introduced me to him was one of the most beautiful girls I ever knew. Had she been young today--she's still alive--the movies would want her. She was just exquisite. And I've often marveled that he'd turn to me when he knew her first. She was tall, she was slender, she had green eyes, and black hair, and exquisite white skin. The outline of her eyebrows was just perfect. Today they pluck them to look like that. She was <u>so</u> beautiful, and yet it was my good fortune that he turned to me.

Now let me see, what else went on there?

Religious Life

Chall: What about the religious life?

Rinder: Well, there was a lot of it. Everybody went to shul. Saturday morning you could see them going off, all the men and the young boys. The girls did not. We learned our religion at home because the Sabbath was observed, the holidays were observed. It was taken for granted that that is how we would learn. We just never went to Sunday School. There was no Sunday School. We had a rabbi come to the house to teach the girls Hebrew, and that's how I learned to read.

Chall: Your father continued to go to shul regularly?

Rinder: Oh yes, with his tallis, and then he lay the tefillin every morning at home.

Chall: Oh, he did?

Rinder: Oh yes. He remained an Orthodox Jew. He never gave up his religion as so many did.

Chall: And did you have a little shul in some nearby place?

Rinder: Oh, nearby there somewhere, yes. And they usually congregated among their own, the people who came from the same towns. I think that's how these groups originally started and continued on.

Chall: And the women wouldn't have had a place anyway. They would have been behind some kind of screen if they had gone.

Rinder: Yes. On the High Holy Days my mother would go too and sit behind those screens, and sometimes we children would go to see our parents during a service, but we wouldn't stay. So, interestingly enough, I learned my Jewish history after I was married, because I knew very little about it. But I just took it for granted; I thought that most people in the world were Jews.

I had been raised in a little Jewish town--I mean, born there--then I came to New York, where I was surrounded completely by Jews and rarely went out of the neighborhood except to school, and then back again into it. And again, even in the school, there were mostly Jewish girls, except the teachers. There was one teacher, Miss Mickel, the sewing teacher, who took an interest in me. She lived way uptown, and one time she invited Rose Luria and me to spend an evening with her. We went there and she served us

Rinder: refreshments, and it was my first introduction to a different way of life. It was very interesting.

Family Life

Chall: What was different about what she had in her house from what you had in yours that you can recall?

Rinder: Oh, everything was different--the size of the rooms, the furnishings, the arrangement of furniture. This was when I was still in grammar school though, you see, so I was still quite young and it was not too late for me to learn. But I learned quickly, that was the thing. The way she served things--don't forget that immigrants didn't do things just in that way. And I took note of everything and learned quickly.

Chall: Did any of this cause a strain between you and your parents, a so-called generation gap? There were gaps that occurred with the first-generation children.

Rinder: Well, not in the sense of the generation gap today. There was not much communication however.

Chall: Was this because your parents were so preoccupied, or because you were feeling a different . . .

Rinder: Both. We were speaking a different language then, in more senses than one. I mean, it was a different language, and quickly my Yiddish became almost faulty, you know, because I wasn't using it as much.

Perhaps because of the large family, there was a great sense of security. My mother was always anxious for us to eat well, to eat enough, as all Jewish mothers are, you know. And that, more than anything else, I think, gave us this sense of security so that to this day, as far as I know, none of us has the various psychological problems that many children develop today. We felt wanted, we felt loved, even though there was no outward sign of affection ever, except if we went on a trip. Sometimes I'd go with some of my friends to some resort for a couple of weeks. Then our parents kissed us goodbye. But otherwise, there was just never any demonstration of affection.

Chall: But as you say, it was a warm, large, loving family.

Rinder: Yes, and close. I mean, we were always there, and we observed all the holidays, and we had seder at home. A very close family.

Chall: And then, did it grow too? Did your uncles and your aunts who came over single, marry and have families?

Rinder: Well, they moved out of New York. They moved to Milwaukee.

Chall: All of them?

Rinder: Yes, for some reason. I don't know now, why.

Chall: And the grandmother?

Rinder: The grandmother too. The grandmother never became acclimated or happy in this country. She was always pining for "home" and eventually went back and was caught in that First World War.

Chall: Oh. That was a sad situation.

Rinder: Very sad. She had one married daughter in Europe--I forgot to speak of that before. She had a married daughter and grandchildren, and she went back there to live with them, feeling that that was home to her.

Chall: Well, it was.

Rinder: Well, I think it was pretty tragic. At any rate, here she had the rest of the family but never felt at home here.

Chall: The life was different.

Rinder: Life was different, yes, and she was too old to change.

Chall: How old was she, do you think?

Rinder: I don't know.

Chall: She seemed very old to you.

Rinder: Yes; oh my dear, all her children were grown, you see. My father had four children by the time she came to America. The daughter who was married had a number of children too and was older even than my father.

Anti-Semitism

Chall: Let me ask you one thing to get the feeling for the community you were growing up in. You said that you grew up in Europe, among Jews, and then in the United States, again, among Jews. Did you have any feelings for the pressures against Jews, the anti-Semitism?

Rinder: Never. There was no indication of it anywhere, not in my life. I saw nothing of that.

Chall: Your parents then, did they have fear?

Rinder: No, they had never had that in the little town where we lived. No, there was no anti-Semitism shown and no acts of terror; nothing like that ever happened. They just came to America for economic reasons rather than for any other.

Chall: So there was no anti-Semitism, which means that your parents had a positive feeling about being Jewish but not the feeling of fear?

Rinder: None at all. We were free of that, thank God. I learned about all this from literature, from reading, from hearing others who had fled from pogroms in Russia. They all surrounded us, of course, and lived near us, and we learned about that later; but we had none of that in Europe, which was very fortunate for us. I think that's why I was so free of any of the psychological problems that beset young people, children who go through these terrors.

Chall: What about your friends in school and in the neighborhood? Had they come from different kinds of areas?

Rinder: No. Most of them were Galitzianers, as they were called, because like us, they had come from Galicia, or Austria. That particular group all congregated in various parts of that East Side. Where we lived, there were our own kind. That's why we lived there, I suppose. If there were difficulties, I never heard of them. Nobody ever mentioned it. And I didn't know there were such things existing until I was grown. We heard of the 1905 Kishinev pogrom in Russia. We all heard about that.

Suffragettes and Politics

Chall: Let's talk about the suffragettes. You were a suffragette?

Rinder: Yes. I became interested in the suffragette movement.

Chall: You were still in your late teens then. What did you do?

Rinder: Well, for instance, I marched in one of the parades down Fifth Avenue, and being so short I was in the front line. And my husband to the very end insisted that when he saw me marching there he vowed then and there to marry me. We started at Fifth Avenue and 59th Street and marched all the way down to Washington Square, down Fifth Avenue. That was quite a march.

How else? Well, I belonged to organizations, and we carried placards. Oh, we were very much interested. I was interested in all forward-looking movements. I never joined a Socialist organization, which surprises me because they were rampant on the East Side, all kinds.

Emma Goldman, the anarchist, used to be around and the man she married. What was his name? I forget. Emma Goldman subsequently came here to San Francisco and spoke at the Scottish Rite Auditorium. We went to hear her. She was quite a well-known figure in those days. She was an anarchist. She was an East Side girl. Everybody was around--all the important Jewish people came from the East Side. I mean, after all, that's where they started.

Chall: How did people that you knew look upon Emma Goldman?

Rinder: Oh, they accepted her. After all, we were all very liberal, and we weren't too far from her beliefs. All my friends were children of very moderately circumstanced families, much less so even than mine, but they all seemed very contented and happy. Nobody knew they were poor, because life was so rich. I think that's what did it. Family life was wonderful, and devoted, and close, and there were no juvenile problems.

Chall: As long as you were eating and . . .

Rinder: Yes, and going to school, all was well. We girls would go to each others' homes to study or chat and come home fairly late at night, about nine or ten--never feared coming home. I mean, there was just no such thing as any untoward problem happening on the street at night. It was unheard of. At least, I never heard of it.

I'm really grateful to this day that my background was what it was, for I think because of it I have an understanding and sympathy for all groups, for all peoples who are struggling to make a place for themselves in the world, much more so I think than had I been born here in some affluent, wealthy family. Because it does something to you if you have been hungry yourself. Not

Rinder: that I ever was, but I've seen it around me. You don't understand and you don't sympathize; you can't.

Chall: It must have been hard for you to work for the marshall evicting the poor.

Rinder: Oh yes. I didn't stay very long because of it. And that was the end of my business career. Well, thank God, I really wasn't equipped for anything. I don't know what I would have done. I had to get married.

Chall: Or work in the family business.

Rinder: Or work in the family business. [Laughter] I should add, however, that having plenty of time on my hands, I did some volunteer work at the Educational Alliance, where I worked with young children. I read books to them and also had them act in short skits I would write for them. We all enjoyed that.

The Rest of the Family

Chall: Before we go into your husband's life then, tell me about the rest of your brothers and sisters. Did they go into the family business, or did they branch out into other things?

Rinder: My sisters remained there until they were married. They both married. And one brother remained there and worked with them until they gave it up. And then he really was in a bad way because though he had some money saved, he had nothing else, and he didn't want to go into it [the business]. Unfortunately, none of us was very much interested in the business. We had to do it. It was obligatory and a necessity, and we helped.

At the same time, the Grossingers opened some little restaurant which wasn't nearly as good as ours. But Jenny, the daughter, had the drive and the interest, and she was the one who made them the success they became.

Chall: Did you know them? Did you know Jenny?

Rinder: My parents knew them. I didn't. I'd like to tell you something about Jenny. A few years ago, I was a delegate to the convention of the Brandeis University National Women's Organization. On the first day there, the graduating exercises of Brandeis University

Rinder: were held. And in the parade of notables was Jenny Grossinger in a cap and gown because she was being awarded the honorary degree of Fellow for contributing a huge sum--I think it was $25,000.

A few days later, my husband and I went to the Catskill Mountains to attend a cantors' convention. It was very close to Grossingers, and so one day I phoned her and said, "Miss Grossinger, I want to tell you that I was present at Brandeis when you received the Fellowship, and I was very proud of you and delighted to know that you were interested in that. I've been interested in Brandeis for a number of years, and I was glad to see that you were doing this for the university."

She was so pleased. She said, "Oh, won't you come to dinner tonight and stay over?" Well, it happened that my husband was giving a paper that night on Jewish music, and it was the last night we were to be there. The next day she was going to New York, but I said, "I should love to see the place if I can manage to go there."

She said, "I will leave word at the gate to admit you." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Well, we have a ruling that only those who are expected may enter." I said, "Very well."

And so the next day, I had somebody drive us over, and we appeared at Grossingers. And sure enough, there was a gate and man there in a little cubicle, a little guardhouse. He had had word to admit us. We went in and looked around the place, which is quite an amazing setup, huge, not beautiful--I was rather disappointed--but apparently a very successful place.

And this is the sort of thing we could have had had we children been interested in this sort of thing, because there was a time when my parents became very tired of the restaurant business and sold it and bought a place in Hunter for a summer resort in the Catskill Mountains. That went very well, but they got tired of that and sold it. I think it was about then that my father decided to retire and quit.

Chall: Did that leave your brothers without any business?

Rinder: Oh no. My oldest brother went on to school. He became a lawyer. He was out here. He attended the University of California. When he was ready for college, I suggested he come out here because I had been here only a short time and I was rather homesick and lonesome. We had no relatives here.

My brother came out and attended the University of California. Then during the First World War, he had to go to Fort Lewis for

Rinder: training, and before he was through the war was over, and by that time he went back to New York and studied law there.

My other brothers went into business, various businesses, and they've been very comfortable.

Cantor Reuben Rinder

Child With a Voice

Chall: Well, let's go into your husband's life. He was born where?

Rinder: He was born in a little town near Lemberg. That too was Austrian then. He went to school there for a time, and then he went to Lemberg to live with an uncle of his who taught him chazonis--that's the art of cantorship--because Rob had a good voice when he was still very young. Already he had a beautiful singing voice. He lived with this uncle, went to school there, and also studied Hebrew and all the subjects pertaining to the cantorship because when he was very young he already knew what he wanted to do. He would tie his older brothers to their seats so that they would listen to him while he proceeded to chant the service to them. He had to have an audience.

When he was about twelve years old, both of his parents died within two weeks of each other of pneumonia, something that could easily be cured today. He was the youngest of five children. His oldest sister was married then, and he went to live with her for about a year, and at the age of thirteen he came to America all alone.

First Years in the United States

Chall: Where was he living with his sister, in the same little town?

Rinder: Same little town, Lemberg. He came to America. He had a brother living in Brooklyn, and he came here and lived with him for awhile. This brother was the oldest, married, with two children by that time. My husband learned English by reading Shakespeare with the help of a dictionary. His formal schooling was varied and limited. You see, he was already thirteen.

Now where would he go? He used to go into high schools and just sit and listen. He was an auditor in most of the schools he went to. You would never have known it had you met him. He spoke beautifully and wrote well. Did you ever meet him?

Chall: No.

Rinder: He used to lecture in public on Jewish music, and he has written a number of things which I'd like to show you; and he spoke at the Grace Cathedral several times and did so well they asked him again and again. Without any accent. You see, he learned English so well.

Chall: He had an ear too.

Rinder: He had an ear for it, yes. In the meantime, he began immediately singing in various synagogues either as a child cantor carrying on services, or with a group of singers in a choir. As a youth his voice was soprano, as young boys do sing. He attended the Hebrew Theological Seminary for a number of years.

Chall: He was primarily studying though to be a cantor.

Rinder: No, they didn't teach cantorship. He was just studying the Jewish studies that they were giving.

Chall: Talmud and all the rest.

Rinder: Yes. And in the meantime, Jewish history. And the president would continually say, "Rinder, what do you want to be, a cantor or a rabbi?" He couldn't make up his mind because he was interested in both, until finally the president said to him one day, "Do you want to practice or do you want to preach?" He thought for a moment and said, "I think I want to practice." So he became a cantor.

But before that he had been traveling with a group singing in various synagogues, and found himself in Boston when, at the age of about sixteen and a half or seventeen, his voice changed. And there was an interval where he was neither a soprano nor yet a baritone, which he became later, and he just had to quit singing for a while.

Rinder: So he got a job in a bank. They needed him because he knew a number of languages. He spoke Polish, German, Yiddish, and Hebrew, and since the bank was in the Jewish quarter where customers spoke different languages and mail from Europe had to be translated, he was invaluable. For that work, he received the huge sum of seven dollars a week.

He was there for about a year, and then he got typhoid fever, and he was in the hospital for six or seven weeks. It's remarkable that they saved his life because they had none of the wonder drugs then, and it was just a tossup whether a man would live or die from one of those diseases. But he pulled through and he went up to Maine to recuperate.

Meeting Stephen Wise

Rinder: There he met Rabbi Stephen Wise, who happened to be in this little colony where people came up for the summer. Stephen Wise took him under his wing, and he became his protege. Stephen Wise used to preach on the Lower East Side on Friday nights, and he used to bring Rob with him to chant the service, after which Wise would preach the sermon. And during that time, Rob got that little position in Brooklyn that I told you of before. He was there for two or three years when he was called to B'nai Jeshurun, which is the largest Conservative synagogue in New York.

Chall: Is that in Manhattan?

Rinder: Oh yes. I forget where it is now. It's moved from its original quarters. And that was a very fine position, one of the largest in the city. They had taken a whole year to find a cantor, and they chose him, which was very flattering. He was there about a year when Rabbi Martin A. Meyer of San Francisco came to New York looking for a cantor because their own cantor had become ill and couldn't function.

Rabbi Meyer went to Stephen Wise and told him that he was looking for a cantor. Stephen Wise immediately recommended Rob. He said, "I don't know whether he would go; he's been in his post only one year. But they took a whole year to find someone, and he's probably the only person around here who would be suitable because he reads well, he speaks English without an accent (which was rare among cantors in those days), and he has a very fine voice."

Memorial Meeting

IN HONOR OF

DR. THEODOR HERZL

(THE FOUNDER OF ZIONISM.)

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

M'VASSERETH ZION
"מבשרת ציון"
OF WILLIAMSBURGH

BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE
274 SOUTH 3rd STREET
W'MSBURGH

on Saturday Evening, July 10th, 1909

Program

Dort wo die Zeder	- - - -	Zion Choral Society N. Sadawsky, Musical Director
Introductory Remarks	- - - - -	Mr. Eiser
Address	- - - - - -	Rabbi Joel Blau
Recitation	- - "Das Volk" - -	A. Kaplan
Sh'Visi	- - - - - -	Zion Choral Society
Address	- "The Life of Herzl" -	Rev. Reuben R. Rinder
Memorial Address	- - - -	Rev. Dr. Rabinowitz
El Mole Rachamim	"אל מלא רחמים"	{ Rev. Reuben R. Rinder Zion Choral Society }
Address	- - - - -	Counsellor. Solomon Sufrin
Zion Degel Machanei Jehudah	דגל מחנה יהודה	Zion Choral Society
Hatikvoh	- - - -	Audience and Choral Society

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Rinder: So Martin Meyer went to hear him and decided this was the man. So he invited him to come out to San Francisco, and that is when my future husband came to me--we were secretly engaged, it hadn't been announced yet--and asked whether I would go to San Francisco. I said that I would and so he went on with Martin Meyer to San Francisco.

Chall: Stephen Wise was the leader at the time of the Jewish Reform movement.

Rinder: Yes.

Chall: This must have been a very important change in your husband's outlook because he came over as an Orthodox Jew.

Rinder: Yes. He was so young that it didn't matter and he changed. He was first with this Orthodox little synagogue in Brooklyn; then the Conservative in New York, which was already a step away from orthodoxy; and then to Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, which was ultra-Reform.

But in the meantime, he also used to sing occasionally a solo, an anthem or something, at the Free Synagogue where Stephen Wise preached on Sunday mornings. And I would go there. All of the youth of the New York East Side would fill Carnegie Hall Sunday mornings. That was when Stephen Wise held his service, not on the Sabbath but Sunday morning.

A few short prayers were read and then he gave his sermon. And he was magnificent, as I recall. We hung on his words. I wouldn't have missed Stephen Wise on Sunday morning for anything. And I would frequently walk from there home to the East Side, from 57th Street, where Carnegie Hall is. The place was packed every Sunday morning. He was the outstanding man in those days. You see how exciting--really, life was very exciting.

Chall: And it was changing. It was moving in all kinds of directions.

Rinder: Yes.

Chall: I had been wondering how your husband had come from what I assumed was an Orthodox village to Temple Emanu-El here, within not too long a time. I knew there had to be some steps along the way.

Rinder: Yes. He was thirteen then, and thirteen more years and this is where he was. It was remarkable. A self-made man in the best sense of that term.

Studying Music

Chall: He came over to this country knowing the music of the cantor as a child. Was his father or somebody in his family a rabbi, or doing anything else in the synagogue?

Rinder: This uncle was a cantor.

Chall: What about his own father?

Rinder: I don't know. You see, he was so young that he probably didn't remember too much, and he didn't speak much about it.

Chall: It was the uncle who apparently sensed his value as far as music is concerned?

Rinder: Yes. He came here almost a full-blown cantor because he knew all the chazonis. There was nobody here to further teach him, nobody else who knew as much. There were other cantors, but there was no school for cantoring as there is today, you see.

Chall: What about training the voice as his voice changed?

Rinder: Oh, he studied with Emma Thursby, a former opera singer, in New York. She and her sister came to San Francisco when they were very old, and I entertained them here. She lived in Gramercy Park, which was a very elegant neighborhood, and he used to go there for his lessons. She loved his voice so that she didn't charge him for his lessons, and he went there once or twice a week. When she had soirees and big parties with singers and musicians, she always invited him to meet them. She also gave him his first piano.

Chall: What a contrast.

Rinder: Yes, from my life to his.

Chall: Mainly from his own earlier life.

Rinder: Yes. When we were in New York a number of years ago, we stopped at the Gramercy Hotel, facing Gramercy Park, and we would take our walks every morning around the park and stand there in front of Miss Thursby's building and worship because Rob had never forgotten her. She did so much for him.

Chall: Did he seek her out as a music teacher?

Rinder: I don't know. Somebody maybe recommended her.

Chall: So he had two very important influences in his life: Stephen Wise and Emma Thursby.

Rinder: Yes, Stephen Wise and Emma Thursby, the two best that could possibly have been. He was so fortunate. Otherwise however would he have gotten to a place like this? Because he was only twenty-six when this position was offered him, and this was one of the finest in the country--none other than New York Emanu-El. And even there, he would never have made a place in the community for himself as he did here because this, being a smaller community and more compact, there was a place for him that New York would never have offered. He became part and parcel of the community life, not only of the congregational life but the whole community.

Chall: So he had a fairly good musical education.

Rinder: Yes, and he had a wonderful ear. Really, our music here in the Temple became nationally known for its fine quality, for the nuances and the understatement. It was always very fine, with great reserve and with great taste, not like the old-fashioned kind of cantors who sang on top of their voices and were very bombastic. He was really a Reform cantor. He had good taste and sensitivity.

Chall: I had never realized that cantors were part of a Reform synagogue, but they probably are in the big synagogues.

Rinder: Well, there are very few. New York Emanu-El has one. There was a time when many of them began to do away with them, but they've moved back and they've taken them on in a great many synagogues. I know Rabbi Louis I. Newman, where he is now in Rodeph Sholom, has a cantor, a very fine cantor, from Israel who has a magnificent voice.

At the time he came to San Francisco he knew that he wanted to be both a cantor and a reader; he didn't want to be a choir boy. So, from the beginning, in his first contract, he stipulated that he was to be cantor and reader. This meant chanting the Hebrew prayers, and reading those portions in the prayer book pertaining to those prayers, and also reading from the Torah. Thus he inaugurated a different role for the cantor.

Speaking Several Languages

Chall: How did it happen that he knew so many languages well enough to be hired by the bank either to read or speak them?

AUDITORIUM OF THE

EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

Series of Orchestral Concerts

GIVEN BY THE

Commonwealth Symphony Society of New York

LEON M. KRAMER, Conductor

Fourth Concert: Sunday Evening, December 17th, 1911, at 8.15

ASSISTED BY THE HALEVY SINGING SOCIETY

Program

Part I

1. OVERTURE "FINGALS CAVE" . . . . . *Mendelssohn*

2. SUITE "L'ARLÉSIENNE" . . . . . *Bizet*

   a) Prelude b) Minuett
   c) Adagietto d) Carillon

Part II

3. SERENADE . . . . . *Robert Volkman*

   String Orchestra

   Incidental Solo - Mr. J. Konevsky

4. CANTATA "COLUMBUS' LAST NIGHT" . . . . . *Wm. Sturm*

   Two Scenes for Male Chorus

   Baritone Solo - Mr. Robert Rinder

5. MARCHE HONGROISE . . . . . *Berlioz*

   From Damnation of Faust

The fifth Concert of this series will take place Sunday Eve'g, January 7th, at 8.15 p. m.

Rinder: Well, Hebrew and Yiddish he grew up with, and Polish. You see, in Lemberg where he went to school, he learned Polish. He, being older than I, was already able to speak it and he spoke it until the very last.

Chall: He did?

Rinder: Yes, he could speak and understand it.

Chall: What about German?

Rinder: German, yes. I don't know where he got his German but he spoke it beautifully and could read it. Maybe he studied it somewhere.

Chall: From music maybe?

Rinder: Yes, in music. He knew a little French too because he used to sing in various languages. He knew a little Russian even. He'd take up these things. With this good musical ear of his, he'd learn things easily. He took piano lessons and played the piano fairly well, enough to accompany himself when he needed it.

Chall: Miss Thursby had given him his first piano. Who taught him how to play, do you know?

Rinder: I don't know. Emma Thursby, I'm sure, didn't bother with that angle.

II MARRIAGE AND THE MOVE TO SAN FRANCISCO

Rinder: We came to San Francisco at the end of July in 1914. We were married June 30. We remained in New York for our honeymoon; nobody knew we were there. We went to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the old Waldorf, and spent a week there. Then we took the train through Canada. We stopped at Lake Louise when nobody else was going there. There were very few tourists at the time. And we arrived in San Francisco about the middle of July, fifty-five years ago.

The Temple Emanu-El Community

Chall: What was it like to come here from New York as a young bride to this kind of community? Your husband, of course, had been settled for ten months. Did he have friends and was he established to some extent?

Rinder: More or less. First I want to give you a background of the community. It was very different then than it is today. It was much more formal. Temple Emanu-El, for the most part, had only the very wealthy people in the community as members. Either they took themselves more seriously than people do today, or I thought they did. They were very formal.

The women particularly dressed more somberly than they do today, and consequently they looked so much older to me. I was twenty-one years old and they at thirty-five or forty looked--well, they just looked old, like grandmothers, to me, with long black dresses. Most of them wore huge black hats with plumes, veils over their faces--in fact, I began wearing a veil too. I should be wearing one today; it would do me much more good than in those days when I was twenty-one and didn't need one. But we all wore veils with dots over them, and oh, we thought we were very elegant.

The Temple at the time was down where 450 Sutter Street is now.

Rinder: It had been rebuilt after the earthquake and fire which had ruined it somewhat, but it was still a very handsome structure. There was one gratifying thing about it: it was filled almost to capacity every Saturday morning. In those days people really attended services, with their children, with their college young people who came in for the weekend, whether from Stanford or the University at Berkeley, or Mills College--they would all attend services. I suppose it helped that the Temple was downtown.

After services, they'd go on and have lunch at the St. Francis or the Palace Hotel and then attend a matinee. Those were the things people did in those days. So everybody came to services, and it was really very gratifying and a wonderful life then. And then the rabbi and his wife and we would go to lunch somewhere downtown. It was all very pleasant.

Chall: After Stephen Wise started a Sunday service in New York, and I understand that throughout the country Reform temples began to have Sunday services, was there any desire on the part of Emanu-El people to have a Sunday service?

Rinder: Very few ever had such services. If they had a service on Sunday, they also had one on Saturday, and Sunday would just be . . . . I don't know of any other than the Free Synagogue that had services on Sunday only instead of Saturday. So if they did, I'm not aware of it.

Chall: And there was no desire here for a change to Sunday?

Rinder: Oh, it never occurred to anybody. They always wanted the service on Saturday. We have had the vesper service, a brief service, early on Friday evening before dinner, and on special occasions, the late Friday evening service at eight-thirty.

Chall: The congregation was conservative then in terms of its approach to services.

Rinder: In that respect, yes. As a matter of fact, I don't remember that they read from the Torah even at the Free Synagogue service on Sunday morning. I'm sure they didn't. There were just a few anthems, almost like a Christian service. Funny, I have no recollection, and I would have, had they read from the Torah.

Chall: So it was primarily hearing Rabbi Wise's sermon.

Rinder: Yes, we went to hear his sermon and that was it. It lasted for about an hour, from eleven to twelve--like a Unitarian service.

Chall: What are some other aspects of your first years in San Francisco?

Rinder: Socially, it was very pleasant too because the families each took turns inviting us, and we were the guests of honor in quite magnificent homes. I began feeling like Cinderella. Every night we'd go out to these places where there were butlers. So many had butlers and chauffeurs, and the cars would pick us up and I'd go to these homes and experience all these unaccustomed ways of living, and come back to my modest home. When we went out to dinner, the following week we'd pay a duty call and leave our card.

Chall: Is that so?

Rinder: Oh yes, and you learned to turn down corners. I forget now what they meant. A right-hand corner meant one thing and a left-hand corner meant another thing. If there were house guests in the house, you wanted to indicate that you were calling on them too, and there was some way of indicating that. Everybody had a tray full of cards in the entrance hall because people were continually calling and leaving their cards. [Laughter]

Chall: I see. Tell me how you got used to this and how you learned what corner meant what. This must have been quite a shock to the suffragette coming in from the East Side. [Laughter]

Rinder: Well, good heavens, you just learned! I realized that I didn't know--that was one good thing. So I watched and looked and I suppose I asked. It's so long ago now--and I learned.

But as I think I told you, life during those early years and into the 1920's was very thrilling and very exciting because we would go to some very grand parties. Sometimes some member would send her chauffered car for us. At dinner there were one or two butlers serving at the table. Then we'd go on to the opera and sit in our hostess' box. It was all very elegant. It was certainly not what I had been accustomed to but you get used to these nice things very quickly. You begin to take them for granted.

Mr. and Mrs. Gottlob who were the owners of the Geary Theatre in those days were members of our congregation. We had become very good friends. They presented us with a box for every play that was given there. And our great problem was to fill the box each time. And that was really very wonderful too. It was a wonderful period.

After Mr. Gottlob [Jacob] passed away, there were several years when we didn't go to the theatre. We couldn't afford the best seats in the house and we wouldn't go elsewhere. [Laughter] We were spoiled. It would have been such a comedown to go upstairs somewhere. So you see, we lived high. Even though we didn't have the money, we lived like millionaires most of the time.

Rinder: I remember two occasions--one was a performance in a theatre; what was the play? It started in the afternoon and we went out to dinner and came back to finish the play.

Chall: It sounds like Eugene O'Neill.

Rinder: It was. And then a Wagnerian opera, which was also given--part one--in the afternoon. We went home and changed clothes, full dress, then went out to dinner and finally went back for the second half of the opera.

Chall: Those were leisurely days, weren't they?

Rinder: Oh yes.

Chall: Do you think there's that much social life in San Francisco now, let's say, among the Jewish people in Emanu-El?

Rinder: I doubt it; I don't think so. If there is, I, being a much older person now, do not participate. So many of the people I knew in those days are no longer here. The younger ones I don't know well enough.

Chall: I just wondered since things have changed so, whether social life also has.

Rinder: I know my daughter's life isn't as full and she's about the age that we were when we were going so strong. She gives two or three big dinner parties a year and that's all. Others have about that many. They do it in a different way.

Chall: In those days, of course, they all had much help.

Rinder: Yes, even we had help. I couldn't have gone out if I hadn't had live-in help. Most of the time we went to private homes and had very delightful times. It was a very full and wonderful life. My husband in particular loved it. He was very much sought after because he was a great and humorous raconteur and interested in everything that was going on. His interest wasn't just the Temple; almost everything politically and musically interested him.

Chall: Did he find time to keep up with reading?

Rinder: Oh yes. Because in spite of all this business, there were full days. I mean, he had to be on the job Friday evening, Saturday morning and Sunday, and the rest of the week he filled in as he saw fit; and there was lots of time for reading and attending concerts and going to the theatre. We attended the symphony, we went to the opera. We attended everything of interest in the community.

Rinder: We never missed anything, ballet, whatever came along, we attended. I told you that Mr. Gottlob who owned the Geary Theatre gave us a box for every play that came along. Oh yes, we lived high.

[Laughter]

Chall: Those were the great days before the Depression when people had money.

Rinder: Oh yes, this was old money as they called it. They never even lost much of it, even in the Depression years. These people were still very comfortable.

Clothes for me were no problem because at Magnin's sales, I would get dinner dresses as low as fifteen or twenty dollars, that were magnificent in those days. I remember one of the handsomest dresses I had was a long white dress of satin interwoven with silver threads that had a train! I paid seventeen dollars for that. I remember these things because it's so different today. I had one or two white and black dresses and that was sufficient. It took me through the entire year. That was no problem then.

Chall: Who were some of the people who came for you with chauffeurs and entertained you in their homes?

Rinder: Mrs. Marcus Koshland comes to mind first because we went to her home most often. She attended services regularly and took a keen interest in the Temple family.

Then Mrs. M. C. Sloss was very attentive, as was Mrs. E. S. Heller, also Mrs. Sidney Ehrman and Mrs. Sigmund Stern. Many others who entertained us had no chauffeurs or butlers but conducted gracious, well-appointed homes with a cook and maid only.

The Rinder's Homes

Rinder: But I must admit it was very difficult for me at the start. It was the first time I had been away from home. My husband, when he first came here, lived in the home of people named Schlesinger. They were very well known in the community. Mr. Schlesinger had had a shoe factory, and he was burnt out during the earthquake and fire. He was too old then to recoup his fortune, and therefore was left high and dry with a household of a wife and two unmarried daughters at the time, two in help, and no funds. So they decided

Rinder: to take in a few boarders and to continue living as they were accustomed to living. My husband had lived there. And so when we came here, he thought until I got to know the community and knew what I wanted, it would be the best thing for us to go there to live, and we did. We lived there for two years.

It was the one time in my life when I really had to diet because we sat down to feasts every night. There were just a few of us and we all sat around the one family table. The cook, named Sing, a handsome, tall Chinaman, was a magnificent cook. And the "maid" was a Filipino boy who brought up my breakfast every morning. We had a suite upstairs.

Then I had nothing to do for the rest of the day. It was really rather ghastly when I look back upon it now. I think that's why I was so homesick. There was no young people's organization and nothing like our Women's Guild today, to look after a young bride who came here. The women who took a personal interest in the Temple family were older women. So most of the people I knew were older women. Of course, as I look back today they couldn't have been more than thirty-five or forty, but to me they seemed very old. And I was really very lonesome and homesick. That's when I suggested that my brother come here to attend college.

Soon after, I had ceased being homesick. What really cured me was a trip home after two years. That cured me more than his presence here. I didn't see too much of him. He would come once a month, perhaps, to have dinner with us. It was nice knowing he was there, that's all. But going home and seeing everybody, that's what cured me. I was never homesick after that.

But otherwise, it was very pleasant. It was a very quiet, conservative kind of community. The city was preparing for the 1915 Exhibition, and car tracks were laid on Van Ness Avenue, so that streetcars could go all the way down to the Marina where the Exhibition was to be held. Land was being filled in. All of the Marina, you know, is filled-in land, or much of it, and that's where the exposition buildings were built, on that land.

After Mrs. Schlesinger's home, we moved to the Keystone Apartments. The Keystone Apartments then were perhaps the first high-rise apartments in the city. They were considered very elegant, on Hyde and Washington. The building still stands, much the worse for wear after fifty years! There was an elevator, there was a doorman, there was an all night telephone service. We occupied a fine apartment with a marine view from every room. We had a four-room apartment which we furnished and that was our first home.

That was one time when we experienced quite a tragedy. Our first

Rinder: child was stillborn. Everything had been perfect all along, and it came on time, but the cord was around the neck, and it was stillborn. And it wasn't until three or four years later that my daughter Meta was born, also while we lived at the Keystone Apartments.

Chall: How were you adjusting to life then? Of course, you were then doing your own housework and expecting a baby and all the rest.

Rinder: No, I had help then. Help was not as expensive as now, and as soon as I knew that I was pregnant I engaged a general houseworker. There were quarters downstairs in that apartment for the help.

Chall: You were doing quite well as a cantor's wife. He must have been well-paid from the beginning.

Rinder: Unfortunately, no, but better than New York, and things were cheap, and we managed very nicely. But we started there paying only sixty-five dollars a month rent for that elegant apartment: four rooms with a view from every room, including the bathroom and kitchen. They were all in a row, as it were. But then came the war, the First World War, and rents began going up, and prices for everything too. And we were virtually priced out of the place; the rent went up too high. That is when we found this place [3877 Jackson], that long ago.

Chall: You moved a long way out then.

Rinder: We moved a long way out. Half the block was empty lots that had never been built on--virgin soil. But this house had been built by two Joseph brothers; one owned the well-known florist shop, Joseph's. These two brothers built this house for themselves, and then they thought this wasn't elegant enough, so they moved to Commonwealth Avenue. If they only knew the difference. This neighborhood is so much more fashionable now. When one of the brothers moved out of this flat, we moved in, and we've been here ever since. My son, Robert Martin, was on the way when we moved in, in January, and he was born on April 24, 1923.

Chall: Your daughter has an unusual name. Does it have a special meaning?

Rinder: Her name, Meta Ellen, consists of the two first initials of my husband's mother's name, Malka Esther--far-fetched, I admit, but satisfying to us then as now.

Children and College

Chall: Sometime during this period I remember that you told me you were living in Berkeley and that you were going to school. What was this?

Rinder: Yes. With each pregnancy I had morning sickness as most women have, and although I had help in those days, I didn't like going into the kitchen to do cooking or anything, so we would sub-lease our apartment in town and go to Berkeley and I would attend college. We stopped at Northgate Hotel the first time. The second time, we were at another hotel on College Avenue. And it was very very pleasant for me, much nicer than keeping house. Until such time as I no longer wanted to be seen on the campus, of course. The third time, I hired a baby-sitter to take care of Meta while I attended classes.

Chall: And what did you study?

Rinder: Oh, I studied French, and English, and philosophy--the Humanities. I have my credits there, so any time I want to go back I can just take up where I left off.

Chall: You did this twice. You had a very understanding, modern and forward-looking husband.

Rinder: Three times, as a matter of fact. The second summer we were here I did that--that's when we met the M'nuchins.

Chall: Yes, that's when you first told me you were in Berkeley and I wondered what you were doing there. How did your husband manage this?

Rinder: It was simple enough in those days. And he wasn't as busily involved in community affairs when we first came as he later became, naturally. He had services on Saturday morning and early Friday evening, and those were the two main events. The rest of the week, he did as he pleased. So he could stay in Berkeley. He attended lectures while he was there too. And there's a biography of him among these papers which was much more full because there were many things I had completely forgotten, so you will find it there.

Developing Close Friendships

Chall: You must have had friends with whom you weren't on such a formal basis that you had to go back and forth with cards. Who were they?

Rinder: That's true. Jane Meyer, wife of our first Rabbi was a close friend. We also found our friends among the social workers' community. There were Mr. and Mrs. Lipsitch [Irving] -- he was head of

Rinder: the Jewish Welfare Federation; it wasn't a federation then, Jewish Welfare Fund, possibly--Dr. and Mrs. Switton, who were the heads of the old people's home; Ethel Fineman, the resident worker of the Emanu-El Sisterhood, as it was known in those days. It's the Emanu-El Residence Club today.

Other good friends were Anne and Hyman Kaplan. He was head of Family Service, a subsidiary of the Jewish Federation. He was a brilliant man, a man of great integrity, outstanding in his field and much respected in the community. Shortly after his retirement at age sixty-five, he died of a severe embolism. His wife, Anne, an outstanding person in her own right, is still active in good causes, particularly in planned parenthood.

Dan Koshland and his wonderful wife, Elinor became our very good friends. My family was frequently invited to Thanksgiving dinner.

Ruth and Philip Lilienthal were two wonderful people--kind, thoughtful and very generous.

Chall: Do others come to mind?

Rinder: Mrs. Amanda Schlesinger was a good friend, and so were Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bachman. Our contacts were mainly social, dinners and similar social gatherings. Marvin and Mrs. Lowenthal (he headed the Zionist organization on the West Coast) were both real intellectuals and contact with them was very rewarding and stimulating.

Albert Bender, an Irish Jew, a bachelor, well-to-do, was a patron of the arts. He befriended artists and young budding writers, bought their works or financed publication of books and poetry. He was a generous and gracious friend and host. He kept precious and semi-precious stones in his pockets, and often on meeting a friend on the street or in his home, he'd hand her (it was usually her) one of these gems. If you admired anything in his home or at a shop in his presence, that object was yours for keeps. He was a colorful, delightful human being and quite irreplaceable.

Then we had friends among the musicians too. And that made it very interesting.

Also we made Zionist friends like Dr. and Mrs. Henry Harris, who became Zionists only years after we first met them. Dr. Harris came from a town up in Washington and Mrs. Harris from Baltimore, and neither of them were particularly interested in anything Jewish. But they had occasion to meet here a number of the outstanding Zionists who used to come to San Francisco: Dr. Weitzmann and Professor Sokoloff, Rabbi Stephen Wise and others who came to collect funds. There was no United Jewish Appeal in those days.

So the Harrises met them and finally were converted to such an extent

Rinder: that Dr. Harris became president of the Zionist organization. Mrs. Harris became president of Hadassah and to this day she is one of the most ardent Zionists, as he was too until his death. They were our very good friends. So we had a very busy life amongst our own intimate friends too.

You know, we had a Yiddish speaking group during the early Twenties that would meet about once a month. We called it the Sholom Aleichem Group. And we read Sholom Aleichem and other Yiddish writers.

Chall: How many of you were there?

Rinder: Oh, there were about twenty-five of us who met in each other's homes.

Chall: Who were some of these people? Did they belong to Temple Emanu-El or were they members of the other synagogues?

Rinder: Most of them were members of the other congregations. Mr. Lipsitch, who was amongst them, was a member of our congregation, but I'm sure that none of the others were.

Chall: Was there any feeling in Emanu-El about the Rinders who were off with these people, on the other side, as it were?

Rinder: No, no, nobody cared. They accepted it. That was the nice thing. They knew it and we didn't hide our interest in Zionism. It wasn't a burning issue in those days. So it didn't matter too much. Later when Zionism did become a burning issue, there were more with us. We didn't stand alone, so it didn't matter either. I mean, we had a right to our way of thinking. After all, Rob wasn't in the pulpit, he didn't preach his beliefs, so he was free to think as he pleased and do as he pleased.

Chall: But you felt comfortable amongst people who really represented the kinds of interests you had.

Rinder: Oh yes. At dinner parties among Emanu-El members, we would discuss it and argue it. They were very liberal and understanding and well-educated people, after all, those with whom we were on very friendly terms.

Our pulpit has always been free to the rabbis to express their beliefs. I think most rabbis have been--no, I shouldn't say that. Rabbi Reichert was not a Zionist, but all the others have been Zionists and spoke for it freely.

Chall: Do you think that over the years the two of you might have been

Chall: a cultural bridge between the Emanu-El people and, let's say, the members of the Conservative or the Orthodox congregations who were more East Side, Yiddish-speaking?

Rinder: I don't know. That may have been so without our knowing it. They always seemed pleased to see us come in, as though it were somebody from the other side of the tracks as it were. [Laughter] The right side of the tracks, you know.

Chall: [Laughter] You still would speak to them.

Rinder: Yes, we still would speak to them.

Chall: Did most of these friendships continue into Rabbi Newman's and Rabbi Reichert's tenures?

Rinder: Oh yes, this continued throughout. It was much later, when my husband became more active in the Temple community, that changes occurred. You see, throughout the first few years when Rabbi Newman was here, and through the first few years when Rabbi Reichert was here (who followed him), Rob was feeling his way and attending to his activities diligently, as he was expected to do; but there wasn't too much contact between us and the rest of the congregants except occasionally socially.

The members of the board and some of the older members of the congregation took a paternal and a maternal interest in the Temple family, you know. And so we were invited to their homes. We made the rounds of the members of the congregation, as I've stated before.

They were very generous and attentive to our children when they were born, when they went to school, when they graduated, upon every occasion. They were our family really, these members of the congregation, the older members in particular. They were really wonderful. When my daughter was born, we received gifts that a princess could have envied; they were exquisite lovely things. When my son was bar mitzvahed, the same thing happened. He was showered with very handsome gifts.

Continually throughout the years, our home was like Christmas, or rather Chanukah, every day. Things were always being showered upon us, wonderful wines, vintages, from France and Germany. We were too young even to appreciate those fine gifts. Now I look back upon them and I regret that I didn't appreciate them more. Later when it ceased, as it did inevitably--those older people passed away, the younger ones didn't follow in their footsteps, they didn't know about such things--and when we had to go out and buy those wines and other needed things, that was different. We

Rinder: suddenly discovered to our amazement the price of French wines or the hard liquors which we had never never had to buy. We'd get cases of them. We had a wine cellar downstairs which was well stocked.

Seders

Rinder: The most spectacular and remarkable moments came through members of the congregation. Our entertaining of these members was chiefly done at Passover when we had them to seder, many of whom had never had a seder in their homes, even though they attended services. They would recall seders at their grandparents' homes or their parents' homes, but they themselves would not have seders. So they were delighted to come, or they seemed pleased to come, to our seder and it was really the gala social event in our home in the course of the year. Also we would invite them when interesting people came to the community. We would have them meet musicians and important Zionists.

Chall: You didn't feel at all that it was necessary for you to reciprocate on the same basis.

Rinder: Oh no. And they didn't keep books either. They didn't wait to be invited. They had us whenever they knew they wanted us for one reason or another. It wasn't a continual back and forth kind of entertainment.

Chall: Was it in those early first years that you began your seders?

Rinder: Not immediately, no.

Chall: You'd have to have your own place first, of course.

Rinder: Yes. But as a matter of fact, we began attending seders at those institutions of which I spoke. The Old People's Home had a great big seder to which the members of the board were invited. We would go there and my husband would conduct the service. Then when I was on the board of Homewood Terrace, which was the orphan asylum here, we had seder in the cottage which had been assigned to me. And some members of the board would be present and we'd have a seder there. Our children went with us, of course. After which, we would go on to the Old People's Home because they would be just at the point where it was time for the singing of the seder songs and my husband would help them with that.

Then every once in a while we'd go to the Emanu-El Sisterhood [Residence Club] for a seder. There too the members of the board would be present, which means the members of the community. And Rob would conduct the service.

That lasted for about ten years. And it was only then that we decided to hold our own seder. And we did that for a great many years, and they were really quite impressive. We had a beautiful

THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

CLIFTON AVENUE, CINCINNATI 20, OHIO

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 7, 1948

Cantor and Mrs. R.R. Rinder,
3877 Jackson,
San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Cantor and Mrs. Rinder:

My wife and I have never attended a more beautiful Seder service than the one we were privileged to participate in at your house. I cannot tell you how grateful we are to you. San Francisco and the part of the Jewish community we met and Temple Emanu El have made a very deep impression upon us and we are really looking forward to going back again as soon as possible.

I know how happy all of you at Temple Emanu El must be to have Rabbi Fine coming out to be with you. I am happy for you too and happy for American Judaism, although I am far from happy for myself in losing him or rather in sending him away. However, I have the comfort of knowing that he will still really be connected with me and with the College and that no where in the United States could I possibly have a better ambassador for our institution or for our cause than he is.

With very cordial greetings in which my wife joins me, I am

Sincerely yours,

Nelson

Nelson Glueck

Rinder: seder as you can imagine. It was like a beautiful service where my husband would chant the kiddush and chant the various songs and prayers that are part of the service.

Chall: Well, you've had an unusual seder in your home, and I suppose people who came haven't forgotten it.

Rinder: Yes, it was really unusual.

Chall: How many people did you have, as a rule, to one of your seders?

Rinder: Oh, twenty-five, or six or seven or eight; as many as we could get around the table.

Yom Kippur

Chall: How did your break-the-fast suppers begin? Who came, and how did you manage this on Yom Kippur?

Rinder: We started the break-the-fast supper about twenty-five years ago. At first, it was just for the president of the congregation and a few intimate friends to meet the members of our choir. Gradually we added more of the officers until finally the entire board membership with their wives or husbands came, until we were seventy or seventy-five all told.

That evening became a tradition which we continued for many years, indeed, until my husband's last illness. It was gay and warm and friendly and eased the tension of that long, strenuous day, a fitting ending to a beautifully moving and emotional day for the cantor and the rabbis.

Chanukah

Rinder: Do you know this lovely house here on Washington Street where

Rinder: Mrs. Koshland used to live?

Chall: No, I don't know it.

Rinder: It's supposed to be a replica of the Petit Trianon in Paris. She lived in it all alone. Her children were all married at the time. But she loved our music in the Temple and frequently brought her non-Jewish friends to services.

One day she said to my husband, "Wouldn't it be nice if we had some of this music in my home so all my non-Jewish friends could come and hear the kind of music we have, and also many of my Jewish friends who don't attend services. Why don't we arrange something?"

She had an organ in her home with pipes and everything constructed right into the house. So Rob arranged a program of Jewish music. And she invited about three hundred people for an afternoon. He read a paper on Jewish music with illustrations, synagogue music, which is liturgical music of course, and some Jewish folk songs, and it was a big success. So from then on, he began giving one every year. The next one was just near Chanukah time.

Chall: Oh yes, I wanted to ask you about that. It became a tradition for many years.

Rinder: Yes, for years and years. He would end the afternoon of music with a chanting of the Chanukah Lights. There were menorahs all over the house. It was a three-story house going up and up into the balconies and the menorahs were placed all over the house. As he chanted and lit each candle--there's a chant for each candle which he had written--a grandchild would be lighting the menorah elsewhere. It was dark by then and soon the whole house was ablaze with these menorahs. Then refreshments would be served after that, usually hot spiced wine. And really, it was the most thrilling moment when the kindling of the lights and chanting was going on.

Chall: This was Mrs. Marcus Koshland?

Rinder: Yes, Cora.

Chall: I had wanted to ask you about that because I had read that she had had this Chanukah celebration in her home from 1928 to 1940. In 1940, she was unable any longer to keep up the tradition. I also noted that she had an evening of music to celebrate Succoth in her home, with Cantor Rinder singing a program of traditional songs and there were violin solos of Ravel and music by Bach, and one hundred and fifty people were present.*

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*Jewish Journal, October 10, 1931.

Rinder: Oh yes, all the great artists would come and play there. I remember meeting Aaron Copland there. You will find among our papers, I think, her first note of thanks after this concert. She was just carried away and her thanks were profuse.

Chall: How fortunate that she had the house and the desire to do this kind of thing.

Rinder: You see, the entrance hall was of white marble with a fountain in the center. The seats were arranged all around there, and up the stairway she put cushions. On the upper story there was a balcony looking down on all this, and there were chairs there, and up and up to the third floor. And people were everywhere. The library was downstairs, the dining room was downstairs, and Rob stood somewhere at a point where he could be seen and heard.

At one time during the opera season, Melchior was there. After Rob got through lighting the Chanukah lights--and he was at his best in those days--Melchior shouted, "Bravo, bravo!"

Do you know Professor Lehman [Benjamin] who taught English at the University of California?

Chall: I know of him. We have interviewed him.

Rinder: He was not an affiliated Jew. He was not particularly interested, and he was present at one of these Chanukah celebrations. I remember, as my husband began chanting, he burst into tears. I can see him sobbing into his handkerchief. Whatever was left of Jewishness within his heart was touched and manifested itself then. And really, those were some of the most thrilling times of our lives. For days after, we would just be on Cloud Nine, as they say today, because the program had been so successful.

Rob had a hard time changing and varying the music. And always he had a paper to read explaining what he was doing. So we certainly educated the community.

Chall: I suppose that some people went to this Chanukah celebration at Mrs. Koshland's home every year and others were new to it each time.

Rinder: Yes.

Chall: And then there must have been grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Rinder: Great-grandchildren by the time we got through with it, yes.

Chall: But it was always finished in the same manner, with the lighting of

Chall: the menorah by the young children?

Rinder: Yes, yes, because we found that this was so successful that it was given at that time of year always, you see. The members of our choir would be there too, to sing. And our organist played the organ. And if they needed some soloists we always had Dorothy Warenskold who sang with us, and Leona Gordon was in our choir for a great many years. The finest singers around here were always members of our choir, so we could always call on them if we needed soloists. It was wonderful, the high point of his career and mine, too. Whatever he did, I was included.

III MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Chall: I understand that you and your husband were very active in the musical life of the Bay Area for many, many years, which I suspect is not usual for a cantor. Can you tell me how you really started?

Rinder: It really is not unusual. After all, his work is in music, and it should be relevant when musicians come to town, or when musicians are in need of help in some form or other, they would naturally come to the cantor if there is one in a community. I suspect so. I've never been anywhere else where there was a cantor, and this is the only congregation I ever knew and the only community I've ever been in. I was very fortunate. I came here as a bride and I'm still here.

You said you wanted me to speak about the musicians we had known.

Chall: Yes.

Isa Kramer

Rinder: One of my earliest recollections is meeting Isa Kramer. Isa Kramer was a chanteuse, as was known in those days, and she had a letter of introduction to my husband. She telephoned, and I said, "Well, we're having some friends in to dinner tonight. Won't you come and have dinner with us?" She said, "Well, my manager, George, is with me." I said, "Well, bring George along."

I didn't know George from anyone else. Unfortunately I have forgotten his other name. She was very charming and a very simple appearing person at first. But he was really a very delightful, utterly charming man whom everybody enjoyed meeting. And we learned that night that Isa was to give a concert at the Scottish Rite Auditorium the following Thursday, and we all planned to go there. There were twelve of us present that night. And we went.

Rinder: The curtain rose and there she was, completely transformed from what we had seen--very glamorous looking, very delightful. She was very petite and had black hair parted in the center with a little bun in the back, a most beautiful black dress down to her ankles, and for about the distance of a foot up, embroidered in vivid colors all around this wide skirt. Then she wore huge yellow diamonds in her ears, one strung on a little black ribbon around her neck, and one around each wrist, hanging.

She began to sing and we were enchanted. She sang in a number of languages, Russian, French, Spanish and Yiddish, each one more delightful than the other.

When during intermission, my husband went back to see her, she didn't ask, "What did you think of my singing?" She said, "How do you like my dress?" Then for the second part, she came out in a similar dress, but in white. And she continued on, and it was all very delightful.

We saw a good deal of her thereafter, whenever she came to San Francisco, three or four times.

Chall: Where did she come from?

Rinder: Well, originally she came from Russia, where she was doing very well. In fact, during one of her intermissions [in Russia], a young man came to see her in her dressing room, and said, "My fiance is with me, and she loves one of your songs that you sing. May we have the words?"

She said, "Well, the song was written expressly for me. It's part of my repertoire and I really can't give it." He said, "Look, I'm a banker, and I shall send you a bouquet of as many roses as there are words in the song each time you appear."

She said, "Well, if that's the case, I will write the words for you." And she did. And true to his word, wherever she appeared, a beautiful huge bouquet of roses was presented to her.

Then came the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, and she had to flee. Her first stop was Alexandria, where she began singing and making public appearances. And one time at one of her concerts during intermission, this gentleman appeared with one rose. He had lost everything too. But he said, "Don't worry. I'll be back."

A number of years passed, and she was singing in Paris. And there she received a huge bouquet of roses with a card saying, "I told you I'd be back. Banker So-and-so." This was, I thought, a very interesting story.

Rinder: Then on one of her visits here, she had shown us a very beautiful little watch which she wore on a chain around her neck, one of these little jewel-encrusted watches, round like a little ball. She said there had been a mate to it in the form of a ring, but at the time she couldn't afford to buy both. She had just bought the watch, and she had regretted all her life that she didn't buy the ring too. Well, on one of her visits here, she was walking down Grant Avenue, our Chinatown, and there in the window of Nathan Bentz' she saw the ring. And she went in and bought it.

Chall: Where had she bought the original?

Rinder: In Russia. Well, it just shows, you see, all the propertied people, or as many as could, fled Russia at the time, taking some of their possessions with them. Somebody who had this ring had come to San Francisco and had sold it to Nathan Bentz, and she bought it back. She came that evening with the ring and the watch, a very happy young woman. And of course it made news; it was in the newspapers at the time, and it was considered a very interesting story. It was good publicity for her.

Chall: When did you first meet her?

Rinder: My daughter was very young then, and she's now in her late forties. Let's say forty-five years ago, as early as that. It was after the Russian Revolution. She eventually went to South America, where she met a doctor and married him.

There's one more little story I have to tell about her. Many years later--my daughter was married then--we read in the paper that Isa Kramer was to give a concert again at the Scottish Rite Auditorium. So my daughter came into town with us--she was living down the Peninsula at the time--and in driving up this late Sunday afternoon, it began to rain. And we were very much concerned. We thought, "Who in the world would remember Isa Kramer?" Nobody would be there but us. We thought it would be just a very sad homecoming.

Well, as we arrived at the Scottish Rite, we saw a mob waiting in line for tickets. We had our tickets at the time and we went in. All the people who had known her formerly and whom we knew in the community were there. The curtain rose to a full house, and before she had sung a note, they applauded for so long she could hardly start her concert.

Chall: My, she must have been very popular.

Rinder: She was. We didn't realize how popular and how many people had remembered her. Very few whom we knew knew of her because she

Rinder: wasn't really world-renowned like some people we know today. It was just perhaps mostly among Yiddish-speaking people because she sang those Yiddish songs. Well, she still sang very well.

We saw her that evening afterwards, and we went to some place where we had coffee, and we talked till the wee hours. And that was the last we saw of her. A few years later, we read in the New York Times that she had passed away. So that's the end of the story of Isa Kramer, and that was really all a very interesting period for us.

Chall: George, I understand, was her manager but not her accompanist. Or was he both?

Rinder: No, he was not her accompanist; he was just her manager and friend.

Ernest Bloch

Rinder: The next important person we knew was Ernest Bloch.

Chall: Was he living in San Francisco at that time?

Rinder: No. Well, when we met him I think he had come here. My husband had occasion to go East, and on the way--he went by train in those days, this was many, many years ago also--as he was approaching Cleveland, where Ernest Bloch was then living, he thought: now here's a man I ought to meet. So he decided on the spur of the moment to get off and meet Ernest Bloch. And he did. He looked up Bloch's address in the telephone directory, and he went to see him at a music school. My husband sent in his card. There were a great many people waiting to see Bloch but my husband was ushered in ahead of all the others. He got up very cordially, Mr. Bloch did, and said, "Anybody coming from San Francisco has priority over anyone else. How do you happen to be here?"

My husband said, "Well, there happens to be a vacancy in our music school in San Francisco, and it occurred to me that you ought to be there instead of here."

And Bloch said, "Oh, how I should love that. I have nothing that interests me in Cleveland. What is there here for me? I would dearly love to go to San Francisco. I understand it's a very beautiful city."

Rinder: So when my husband returned, he spoke to the powers that be at the music school. Ada Clement was the head of it at the time. She thought, "What a wonderful idea to have Ernest Bloch lead a group like this." So they communicated with him and Ernest Bloch came to San Francisco to head the music school.

Chall: Oh, he came to head it, not just to teach.

Rinder: Yes.

The Sacred Service

Chall: That was quite a coup on your husband's part, wasn't it?

Rinder: Oh yes. It was during that time that we got to know Ernest Bloch quite well, and it was during that time that my husband thought that Bloch ought to be commissioned to write a Service for the synagogue. Here we had one of the greatest composers living, the greatest Jewish composer, and there had been so little Jewish music written by modern compposers that this was our opportunity. He contacted a number of friends, chief amongst them, Mr. Daniel Koshland.

Chall: Can you think of any of the others who were patrons at that time?

Rinder: Well, it was Daniel Koshland who would go amongst his friends and collect the money. This happened almost annually. When my husband wanted to put on some musical event at the Temple, he would go to Mr. Koshland and say, "I need five thousand dollars." And within a week he'd have five thousand dollars. It was really a wonderful time. That was in the Twenties in particular, when there was a pretty affluent society, as there is today. That was just before the Depression, ten years in the Twenties.

And Rob went to Ernest Bloch and told him that he had some money for him and would he write a Service for the synagogue? Ernest Bloch was very much intrigued with this suggestion. It had never occurred to him somehow, even though he had written "Schelomo" by then, and various other Jewish pieces. But this was really something novel, and he said, "Let me think about it." He took the Union Prayer Book to study it and see what he could make of it.

In the meantime, Gerald Warburg, of the Warburgs of New York, came to San Francisco. He was a cellist traveling with his own quartet

Rinder: and playing concerts throughout the country. When he came to San Francisco, he was our guest at dinner one night, and my husband told him of the commission he had given to Ernest Bloch. Gerald asked, "How much are you paying him?"

My husband said, "Well, I'm paying him three thousand dollars." That's what we had collected, and three thousand dollars in those days was three thousand dollars. Gerald said, "That measly sum for that great man? Why, how can you?" Rob said, "Well, what would you suggest?" He said, "Well, I think that man should get ten thousand dollars, and I'll see that my family gives it to him." Rob said, "Well, that's splendid. Why, you do so, by all means." So he said, "I will do so, on condition however that you introduce me to Ernest Bloch because I've wanted to meet him all my life." Rob said, "Certainly."

So he made an appointment, and the next day they went to see Ernest Bloch. And as they entered and Rob introduced them, Gerald Warburg said, "Mr. Bloch, I've wanted to meet you for a long time. I want you to tell me what is wrong with me." Meaning musically, I suppose.

And Ernest Bloch said, "I think you have too much money."

My husband said, "Well, don't worry. That will be altered shortly because you're going to get some of it." And they told him the situation, and of course he was delighted. Gerald gave him two thousand dollars in advance, with which Ernest Bloch went to Switzerland for peace and quiet in order to write the Service.

During that period, he would write my husband telling him how this work was progressing and how it was developing in his mind.* He retranslated some of the prayers.

Chall: Into English?

Rinder: Well, they are in English in the Union Prayer Book, but he reworded them to suit the music. The whole thing took approximately a year or so. He was gone about a year or a year and a half. When he returned, the Depression had set in. He arrived in New York with the manuscript under his arm. He went to see Gerald Warburg, and Gerald said, "Well, Mr. Bloch, you know we're in a Depression now."

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*Copies of this correspondence are being placed in the Archives of the Western Jewish History Center of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum. The original letters are in the University of California at Berkeley with the University's collection of Bloch papers.

these same hopes, and truth, about the Unity (again! again! אחדות ") of man, of the Universe! Thus, after the Hakodosh Boruch Hu, almost immediately, and during the symphonic music, the Minister (and, on the Concert Stage, a Recitant) talks "May the time not be distant" in a measured way (This gave me much trouble! for I had to declame it many and many times, as if I were preaching myself - and only after I had found all the accents, inflexions could I write the real rhythm and make it concord with the Music!!

Of course, this will be in English (or in French, German, Italian, etc. - in the language of the country, when performed- which will be very striking and symbolic!

I had to condense and modify a little the text - but very little, in fact - I changed "idolatry" in "fetishism" which is much stronger and more general - and truer - for it contains all forms of false gods men adore (Law! Money! beliefs in alls, isms of all kind!) I divided this text in several parts. When "O may all men recognize that they are brethren..... till "for ever united" - which I repeat - "for ever united before Thee" comes, I used, in the instrumental part, one of the most beautiful motivs of Schelomo and at "Then, shall Thine Kingdom" a new motiv which is from my never finished "Jeremiah"!! and a coronation of it! Then, the Chorus says the "Bayom-hahu and 2 measures of terrific climax..... then a sudden decrescendo and total change of color..... The music goes on, subdued (motiv of the Jewish Poems (Hope after Death) and on that music, again, measured, the Minister goes on with the full text "And now ere we part....."

Portion of the second letter from Ernest Bloch to Cantor Rinder. March 5, 1931 from Switzerland. Cantor Rinder typed the copy from the hand-written original.

Rinder: Mr. Bloch said, "Well, I've devoted almost two years to this thing, two years of my life. I was promised a certain sum and I think I should get it." And he did. He got the full sum of ten thousand dollars.

Strangely enough, the premiere of this Service was given in Italy, in Rome, under Mussolini!

Chall: Really? A modern Jewish Service, in a synagogue in Rome? Why wasn't it done here?

Rinder: Well, Mr. Bloch had to go back to Europe, and he had his manuscript with him. We hadn't received it yet, you see. He didn't perform it until several years later. I'm distressed at the moment to realize that I don't recall for what reason that was. Well, after all, we really didn't pay for it. New Yorkers had paid for it. So it didn't belong to us, although we had originally commissioned him to write it.

Chall: I see. It was not under your control.

Rinder: No, not ours, and he had a right to go with it wherever he pleased. It was given in Rome first, in New York next, and finally here in San Francisco, at the Temple Emanu-El [March 28, 1938], with an orchestra of about thirty men from our San Francisco Symphony and a chorus of about one hundred voices. Our own singers from the choir--who are really outstanding--were the soloists. And the performance was magnificent. The music critic at the time said, "We have waited too long to hear Ernest Bloch's Service."

Chall: What was it called?

Rinder: "Avodath Hakodesh."

Chall: How was this financed?

Rinder: We again had to collect some funds from friends to cover expenses because it's a very expensive thing. The composition has to be printed, a copy for each musician and for every singer, and that's very expensive. You pay soloists and those run high. You pay musicians. You see, this as well as the other compositions (the Services my husband commissioned) were all done on a grandiose scale, almost like symphonies. They were for a huge choir, for an orchestra--as many as one wishes.

Chall: How often did you give that Ernest Bloch Service?

Rinder: We gave it a number of times, sometimes not in its entirety, just portions. As a matter of fact, there was one time where--I think

March - 1938

Bloch's 'Sacred Service' Heard First Time in S. F.

By ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN

After five years Ernest Bloch's "Sacred Service" came to performance in the city in which it was conceived, and once again it was proven that the most important happening, from the point of view of musical creation, that has yet occurred in San Francisco was Bloch's residence here early in the 1930s.

No one may judiciously proclaim a masterpiece after a single hearing, but I suspect that many members of the huge audience that jammed Temple Emannu-El last night to hear the service as presented by the Federal Music Project were sorely tempted to commit that indiscretion.

The work is unique and not only because it is the first organic, symphonic setting of the Jewish liturgy. Its special uniqueness lies in this—that of all the compositions on Hebraic themes by a composer noted for his handling of such subjects, this most Hebraic subject of all sounds least like the music of Israel.

TRADITIONAL TOUCHES

There is, I think a very good and psychologically sound reason for this apparent paradox. In "Schelom," and the "Jewish Poems," "Baal Shem" and other works, Bloch is exploring folk lore as a musical nationalist, for its racial savor and color. In the "Sacred Service" he approaches the liturgical text from the point of view of its universal religious and ethical significance, and therefore composes for it a music that trenscends purely racial considerations. A nationalistic setting of the service would certainly be far from amiss, but that does not happen to be Bloch's way in the present score.

There are, to be sure, many touches of the traditional synagogue chant in this music, but they are only occasional and incidental. Traditional Jewish music is Oriental; it exploits the elaborately soloistic and decorative cantilation of the single voice against a very simple harmonic background, or without background at all, and yet, despite its tourtuous elaboration of the solo line, it is stark and bare in effect. And there is very little of that in Bloch's "Sacred Service." It is, rather, rich, climatic, subtly harmonized, marvelously colored with the full symphonic and full choral palette, dramatic to the verge of opera in its contrasts of pace and sonority.

EPIC GRANDEUR

There are suggestions of "Parsifal" here and there, which does not imply imitation, but simply that two great creative intellects can sometimes feel in similar ways about similar things. The service is built up from the vast, deep, primordial roots of religious emotion. It speaks at times with an epic grandeur paralleled only in Handel and Bach, with an awful, subdued sense of mystery and wonder akin to the final meditations of Beethoven, with a soft lyric breath like that in the "German Requiem" of Brahms. All of which it resembles not the slightest, for it is altogether Bloch, a Bloch who has put aside the rugged, hammer-and-tongs dynamism of his abstract instrumental music to brood for a while over an age-old poem that has a thousand meanings or one meaning, and is here revealed in a new and supremely beautiful context.

The performance was probably the best the Federal Chorus and orchestra have given together. It was one of the great triumphs of Giulio Silva's career as a conductor, and no less a triumph for Austin Mosher, who replaced Everett Foster at the last minute, and did the trick cantor's part superbly. Incidental solos were efficiently taken by Sophia Samorukova and Nona Campbell. Cantor Reuben Rinder introduced the service with a brief talk, and took a dramatic part in it with the spoken prayer against an orchestral accompaniment. The whole thing ought to be repeated, not once but several times.

Rinder: for the hundredth anniversary of the congregation--we gave a portion.

In Ernest Bloch's Service, by the way, he includes, of course, the Kaddish, the mourners' prayer. That is recitative, and my husband would stand on the upper pulpit and recite or declaim this to the accompaniment of the music. And that really turned out to be one of the most thrilling parts of the Service.

Chall: Did you tell me once that there was a portion of this Sacred Service that your husband had taken from the prayer book, rendered into a modern musical version and sent off to Ernest Bloch, and that he put it in in toto?

Rinder: Yes, he included it.

Chall: What's the name of that? Does it have a particular title?

Rinder: It's taken from the Morning Service, known as Tzur Yisrael. When the critics first heard it, they said, "By this you can tell that Ernest Bloch has a fine Jewish background, a real understanding of Jewish music." However, I think the rest of it is typically Bloch, isn't it?

Chall: In 1956, you celebrated Ernest Bloch's seventy-fifth birthday by performing again the Sacred Service. I saw a note that it was broadcast in February. The Service was given January 8, so the broadcast must have been taped.

Rinder: It was taped that night and the studios used it.

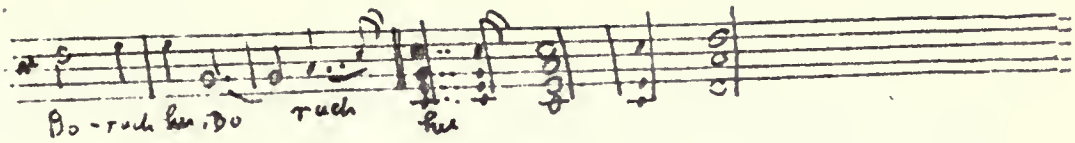
Chall: I noticed a letter from your husband saying he was in the hospital with double pneumonia at the time he listened to the broadcast. Was he rather exhausted after this?

Rinder: He may have had a cold that he never took care of, he was so busy. This happened several times. Every time he had a cold it would turn into pneumonia.

Chall: Now during this interim period when Bloch was working in Switzerland and then apparently went back to Europe, what became of his position with the Conservatory? Was this the San Francisco Conservatory of Music?

Rinder: Yes.

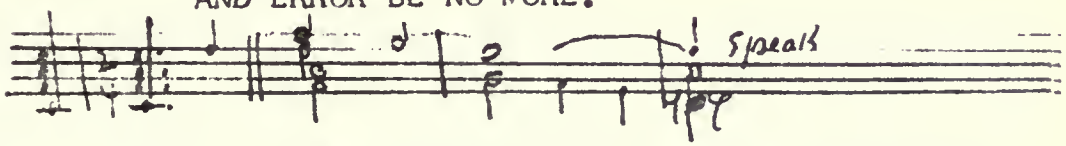
Chall: Was he on leave?

Rinder: Oh, he stayed here for a number of years. I wonder whether he

MAY THE TIME NOT BE DISTANT, O GOD,

WHEN THY NAME SHALL BE WORSHIPPED IN ALL THE

EARTH, WHEN UNBELIEF SHALL DISAPPEAR

AND ERROR BE NO MORE.



WE FERVENTLY PRAY THAT THE DAY MAY

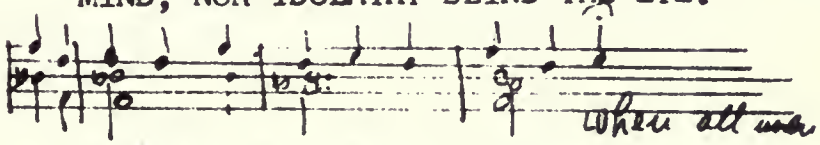
COME/WHEN ALL MEN SHALL INVOKE THY NAME,

WHEN CORRUPTION AND EVIL SHALL GIVE

WAY TO PURITY AND GOODNESS, WHEN SUPER-

STITION SHALL NO LONGER ENSLAVE THE

MIND, NOR IDOLATRY BLIND THE EYE.



WHEN ALL WHO DWELL ON EARTH SHALL KNOW

THAT TO THEE ALONE EVERY KNEE MUST

BEND AND EVERY TONGUE GIVE HOMAGE.

Cantor Rinder's guide for Recitative of Kaddish and translation to Ernest Bloch Sacred Service.

Rinder: came back after writing the Service or if that was the end. I don't know whether he would have been given that length of time leave to do this; I doubt it. He was with the Conservatory a number of years, and it grew to a very fine and well-recognized conservatory because of his presence. You see, he gave it prestige and did some wonderful work there.

Ernest Bloch Meets Yehudi Menuhin

Rinder: One very interesting episode during his stay here: Yehudi Menuhin, who lived here at the time, had a birthday. He was very young then; oh, he couldn't have been more than eight or nine years old. It was before he went to Europe. His parents asked him what he would like for his birthday, and he said he would like Ernest Bloch to come to dinner. Ernest Bloch had shied away from him because he wasn't interested in child prodigies, and we all know what a prodigy Yehudi was. Ernest Bloch was invited to the dinner, and so were we.

You know, the Menuhin children never went to school; they had tutors in French, in English, in mathematics, arithmetic first and then higher mathematics, and music of course--they all studied music in one form or another.

So there we were at dinner, all the tutors and some friends, quite a group of us. Then after dinner, the music critics in the community were invited and a great many more friends--the living room was filled, people were sitting around on the floor. And Ernest Bloch sat down at the piano, and Yehudi and he played. And afterwards Hephzibah, his sister, played with Yehudi, and Yaltah, another sister, played, and every one of them singly. It was really a memorable evening.

Chall: But these were little girls then because Yehudi was only eight or nine, and his sisters couldn't have been more than five or six.

Rinder: They were very little girls. It was really a very thrilling and wonderful evening. I shall never forget it. They lived in a house on Steiner Street near Golden Gate Avenue. I'll tell you later about the Menuhins, but this was really a wonderful evening. After that, Yehudi and Ernest Bloch were very good friends, as you can well imagine.

We met many musicians after that of lesser light.

MMUNITY BULLETIN CONSOLIDATED WITH EMANU-EL Friday, July 24, 1959

Cantor Rinder Pens Glowing Tribute to Ernest Bloch, Internationally Famous Composer

(Continued from Page 1, Col. 3)

exhortations and courageous pronouncements; his metaphysical speculations and philosophic observations on art, on music and on life in general, will be long remembered by those who had the good fortune to sit at the feet of this great master and teacher.

Through his creative genius, Bloch ushered in a new musical era. In 1910, when his opera "Macbeth" was first performed in Paris, Romain Rolland, the famous author of "Jean Christophe" was so stirred by this work that he referred to Bloch as one of the masters of our time and a prophet of a new era in music.

Reward of Immortality

Bloch's reputation as an eminent composer is firmly established through such works of his as the "Symphony in C sharp Minor," the opera "Macbeth" "Iliver-Printemps," "Helvetia" and the symphony "America", the former dedicated to his native land, the latter to his adopted country. He also wrote a number of Quartettes, Violin and Viola Sonatas. These works have become part of the repertoire of almost every great symphony orchestra in the world. They are works sufficient to insure mortal man the reward of immortality.

But Bloch did not stop there. He also composed important works for which he eagerly drew inspiration from authentic Jewish sources. While he felt himself culturally part of the occidentalism of a Bach, Brahms and Beethoven, he was at the same time consciously aware of being spiritually the descendant of the Priests and Prophets of Israel. His pride in this Jewish heritage expressed itself in his works, in his lectures and in his conversations.

'The Jewish Soul'

About his Jewish music he once wrote: "It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible . . . the freshness and the naivete of the Patriarchs; the violence of the prophetic books; the Jew's savage love of justice; the despair of Ecclesiastes; the sorrow and the immensity of the Book of Job; the sensuality of the Song of Songs. All this is in us, all this is in me, and it is the better part of me. It is all this that I endeavor to hear in myself and to translate in my music; the sacred emotion of my people that slumbers far down in our soul."

Bloch was one of those rare Jewish creative artists who accept their Jewish heritage without conflict or spiritual divisiveness inherent in so many Jews who are the victims of the forces of assimilation. In his symphonic rhapsody "Shelmo," his "Trois Poemes Juives," his symphony "Israel" and "Baal-Shem Suite;" in his Three Psalms, the 22nd, the 114th and 137th, there abound the very Hebraic characteristics which mark him as an individualist blazing new paths in the genuine tradition of the Prophets. This is noted particularly in the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me," in which the voice of the lonely, the forsaken, the disinherited of the earth is heard as perhaps it has never been heard before in any music importuning, demanding to be heard, to be judged, to be helped.

A Major Work

One of Bloch's major works is his "Sacred Service," which is a complete musical setting to the liturgical prayers for the Sabbath. He started this work in San Francisco and completed it two years later in Rovedero, Switzerland. It was performed in synagogues in San Francisco, New York, London and Paris, and in concert form with chorus and symphony in Israel and in other parts of the world. Of this work Bloch wrote: "Though intensely Jewish in roots, the message seems to me, above all, a gift of Israel to the whole of mankind. It symbolizes for me far more than a Jewish service, but in its great simplicity and variety, it embodies a philosophy acceptable to all men." How true! In a letter which Bloch wrote to this writer we learn that this "Sacred Service" was performed in an English Cathedral in London with a large choir and organ.

Through the help of an Endowment Fund, created by a few friends in San Francisco, Bloch was enabled to lecture at the University of California and to devote his time to composing without financial worries. The last years of his life were spent in Agate Beach, Oregon, where he died peacefully after reaching the age of nearly four score years.

To the Jewish people the music of Bloch will always have special meaning and significance, not only because of their proverbial love of music, but because in Bloch's music we hear a voice speaking with inspiring eloquence to all mankind in the authentic Hebraic spirit.

Bloch in the Repertoire

Chall: What about Bloch's "America," which Alfred Hertz and the symphony performed amid much fanfare?

Rinder: There had been a national contest, and he won it with his "America."

Chall: Most of his work isn't part of the standard repertoire today, is it?

Rinder: Not anymore, no, unfortunately. He was very unhappy about that. He was a very unhappy man. He loved talking about his illnesses and getting people's sympathy.

Chall: Was he an ill person?

Rinder: Well, not really. He liked talking about it more than the fact that he was, because he carried on and he worked until the very end and composed. But I think he was hurt that he wasn't performed more. He was complaining once bitterly that his music was not being given in Israel. When we went to Israel, however, we inquired of Mr. Marc Lavry, whom I shall mention later as one of the composers of one of the Services, who was then head of the Israeli Symphony of the Air, Music of the Air. We asked, "Why don't you play Ernest Bloch's music?"

He said, "Why, how can you say that? There's scarcely a day goes by when some number or other of Bloch's is played--continually." Ernest Bloch, never having been to Israel, didn't know that, but he liked to talk about it.

You see, so he was a complainer, but a delightful person, a colorful person, and most interesting. He had things to say about everything in the world and said them with gusto, with enthusiasm. Life was really a very thrilling thing for him, and I think he expressed it in his music because it was very colorful. Are you acquainted with his music at all?

Chall: With some of it, yes. I'm glad to get a little insight into his personality too. You wanted to go on with some of the other people.

Rinder: With some of the other musicians. I don't think we met many of them quite as intimately as we did Mr. Bloch who, because he lived here, we saw quite frequently.

The Skinner Organ

Rinder: Mr. Skinner [Ernest M.], the builder of organs, came out here when we were building our Temple, where we have the Skinner organ, one of the greatest organs in the country. The reason is that he was here while the building was going on, and he and my husband supervised the spacing and the placing of the organ, which is very important.

Frequently churches and synagogues are built, and almost as an afterthought a place is made for the organ. At our Temple, it seems almost as though the Temple is built around the organ, it occupies so important a place.

Mr. Skinner was here five or six weeks. At that time, my husband saw to it that they put in some of the pipes which sound like the shofar, so that when the shofar is blown there can be an echo of it on the organ. And it's really a very beautiful thing. There are chimes on the organ, and it sounds as though real chimes are ringing when it's only one of the pipes. It's really a very magnificent instrument. So many church and synagogue organs sound so lugubrious, but ours sounds like a symphony.

Ludwig Altman

Chall: Well, that means you have to have an experienced organist.

Rinder: Oh, we have. We have one of the greatest: Ludwig Altman. We are very fortunate to have him with us. He arrived here from Germany about two years before Wallace Sabin, our own organist, passed away. He had been sitting next to our organist for two years watching him play the instrument every Saturday morning, so that when Mr. Sabin passed away, Ludwig Altman was there to slip right into his place.

Chall: But he was an organist anyway.

Rinder: He was an organist, yes.

Chall: He must have been quite young.

Rinder: Oh, he was--in his late twenties. He's been with us twenty-five years and really occupies a very important position musically in

Rinder: the community. Whenever an organist is required at the symphony or any other occasion, Ludwig is asked to play.

Israeli Music Students

Rinder: We had a number of young people from Israel who came to San Francisco either to study or to play. There was one young boy, Max Pressler, who came to practice on our piano. But when I found that he had no place to live, I invited him to come and stay and spend a week here. He had entered a contest that was being given here in the city, and he was a pianist. He came all the way from Israel here to try out, and I drove him to the museum up on the hill, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, where the contest was being held.

I said to him, "Now, don't worry because I was present at a time when there was a contest among young violinists, and Yehudi Menuhin was there, and he did not win. So you see, your whole future does not depend on your winning this or not." He said, "Oh, I'm so glad you told me that." And he went in.

All day I waited and waited to hear from him, and finally about four o'clock he telephoned. He had won the prize--a thousand dollars! That was really very thrilling. So he went back to Israel, and he had some success there. I don't really know what finally became of him, but he played. At least he had that back of him, that wonderful experience.

Then there was a young man, Amiram Rigai. Amiram was also a pianist who came here from Israel penniless but eager to study. Then commenced a period when my husband had to go among friends and try to get him some money to stay and to study. Finally, Mr. Warren Epstein was kind enough to contribute a very generous sum, and Amiram remained here for a whole year studying. He gave one or two small private concerts and then went back to Israel, where he has been playing ever since and has been very successful. He's not one of the great prodigies of our time, however.

The Child Prodigies

Yehudi Menuhin

Rinder: There was a period when a host of child prodigies seemed to be born right here in San Francisco; it was really an amazing period. First came Yehudi Menuhin. We met the Menuhin family in about 1918 or 1919. They had just arrived from the East with Yehudi, who was eighteen months old. Mr. Menuhin applied for a teacher's position in Hebrew at our Temple. Therefore our rabbi, Martin Meyer, knowing that we were in Berkeley at the time, said that this family had just arrived, why didn't we call on them and see if we could do something for them. We called one evening.

They were living in a little shack on the wrong side of the tracks. When we came in, there was one room with a piano in it and stacks of the New York Times and Harpers magazines. Then there was a tiny little bedroom, and we heard a child humming. He was humming an arpeggio, setting Hebrew words to this music. He was singing, "When I awake in the morning, I will play with Lily" on key.

We said, "Who is this child?" They said, "That's Yehudi, our little boy of eighteen months." And my husband said, "Why, that's incredible. That child's a genius." And we all laughed at it and thought nothing of it of course. But it is unusual for an eighteen month old baby to be singing an arpeggio in Hebrew. Of course, Hebrew was his first language because the parents spoke it.

They had met in Palestine, married there, had come to America, moved to New Jersey where Yehudi was born. Then they heard about California, and they heard of it on a stormy winter night when it was snowing and cold and freezing. They had met a friend, Mr. Jack Verdi, who said, "Tomorrow I leave for California. Why don't you come along?" And they decided then and there that that was what they would do. And they came to California, as I said, when Yehudi was eighteen months old.

We saw a good deal of them then. They moved to San Francisco and we became friends. We saw each other quite frequently. Hephzibah was born a few years later. And two years after that, Yaltah came, and that is when they moved to this house on Steiner Street and these children began growing up.

Rinder: They were still infants in arms, most of them, when they were taken to the symphony concerts on Friday afternoon, sat on their parents' laps listening to music. Neither of the parents was musical particularly. They loved music, they enjoyed it, and they attended concerts. And these children were taken, even before they could walk or talk, to listen to music.

When Yehudi was about three years old, his maternal grandmother sent him a little toy violin, and he began playing it, and it just didn't sound like anything, and he threw it to the floor and it broke. He just had no use for it. But they thought if he felt that way about it, they perhaps ought to get him a real violin. So they got him a little violin and took him to a Mr. Anker [Sigmund], who was a music teacher here in the community to whom most little violinists went for their first lessons.

During that time, my husband had been watching these children, but he thought nothing of them being great musicians until one day my husband said to Yehudi, "Let me test you to see whether you have perfect pitch." And he tested him and that child had perfect pitch. My husband said to the parents, "I think it's time for Yehudi to have a better teacher. I will talk to Persinger."

Louis Persinger was then concertmaster of our symphony orchestra. Mr. Persinger, like Ernest Bloch, didn't have much interest in child prodigies, and said so. He said, "I'm not interested." My husband pleaded with him and said, "Please do this for my sake. You don't have to teach him if you don't want to, but just listen to him and tell me what you think of him." So it was arranged to take Yehudi to see Mr. Persinger.

Mr. Menuhin drove them to Mr. Persinger's home. Mr. Menuhin was rather hot-headed and a very impetuous kind of person, and my husband said, "You better stay downstairs, and I'll take Yehudi up." He thought it would be wiser under the circumstances. So he took Yehudi up, and Yehudi, at the age of about five, played the Lalo Concerto. And of course, Persinger was enchanted with the child and said immediately, "Yes, of course I'll teach him."

And do you know what happened? Yehudi made Persinger, as well as Persinger helping to make Yehudi, because as Yehudi became known--and shortly thereafter he became known nationally, internationally--the world knew who his teacher was. Persinger was called to be concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic and stayed there until he passed away. He was as well known as Yehudi thereafter. So it was really a wonderful relationship. He taught Yehudi until he went to Europe for further study.

In the meantime, Yehudi was working here very hard. He was studying.

Rinder: He had wonderful tutors. Arnold Perstein taught him English. He studied French and German. His life was very much supervised and restricted. He had scarcely any friends, unfortunately, just hand-picked one or two. One in particular whom I know very well, Dr. Bernard Kaufman, Jr., who spoke Hebrew at the time, was one of his very intimate friends. Yehudi was not allowed to play ball like other children because it might hurt his hands. He could take walks, and that was the extent of the exercise he could have. But it didn't seem to affect him at the time. Whenever I saw him, he seemed like a very happy, normal child.

One night we had gone to bed when the telephone rang. It was Moshe--Yehudi's father. He said, "Rob, come quickly. Yehudi and everybody else is sick." So Rob got dressed; he took a taxi and he went there. Almost everybody was lying around on the floor unconscious. Yehudi had had an attack of asthma, and he couldn't breathe. He was so bad that they didn't even have time to phone the doctor when Marutha, the mother, fainted. The girls were fast asleep. Moshe was half-gone, so my husband quickly phoned the doctor he knew, and he came and revived everybody and gave Yehudi something to ease his breathing. Yehudi continued for a number of years thereafter to have these attacks of asthma, very bad attacks, but apparently he got over them because he has lived, as far as I know, a very normal life.

They needed help, and they needed a patron. Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Ehrman were approached, and they did a very noble thing. They deposited quite a large sum of money, I think something like twelve thousand dollars, in the bank, and they said, "Now you go ahead and use this money to help Yehudi in his career." And that enabled the whole family to go to Europe, where he studied with Enesco. He studied there for about two years and then returned for his eleventh birthday, when he gave a concert at the Civic Auditorium on his eleventh birthday, a Sunday matinee. And that place was crowded with ten thousand people; and it really made history because at no time had anybody heard an eleven-year-old play as he did.

Of course, we were there. Marutha, Yehudi's mother, had brought a very pretty pink silk dress for my daughter Meta from Paris; so she wore her beautiful new dress and went to the concert too. Really, it was an occasion. It was like a pilgrimage. Parents and children were seen coming from all directions to hear this child prodigy. It was really a very thrilling time.

What else can I say about him? The rest is history. He belonged to the world. He went back to Europe, he studied further, he played. I don't think he needed to study any further. He just played on, until recently when he began conducting more than

Rinder: playing and holding sessions in England--you know, Bath, where he has a music school.

That is all I know about him, except that we see him every time he comes to San Francisco. We attend his concerts. I've missed only one of his concerts that he's ever played here, and that was the time when my husband was so ill that we couldn't go. But otherwise we have attended every one. One outstanding one was when he and Hephzibah, his sister, played together.

Chall: They do that very well.

Rinder: They're coming again, do you know? They'll be here in December. There'll be a benefit for the Mount Zion Hospital. They've taken the Opera House, a part of it, I think, for that evening. That should be a very gala event.

Chall: I wanted, as long as we're on the Menuhins, to talk to you about the family a little more. During the period when Yehudi was being taught by Persinger, before he went abroad, I presume the girls were studying piano. How did it come about that the two girls became pianists? Hephzibah, particularly, has been a noted pianist. Do you recall how they started?

Rinder: Hephzibah started playing with Mrs. Blockly at the same time my daughter was studying. Mrs. Blockly was then a well-known piano teacher in the community. Now whether she had more talent than most children, or whether there was so much music going on in that family that automatically she practiced more than most children, I can't say. I know there was a piano in the kitchen--an upright piano--and a grand piano in the living room. The piano in the kitchen was there so that the mother could supervise the practicing while she did her chores and did the cooking.

You see, the girls were being tutored at the same time that Yehudi was. The parents didn't believe in sending children to school. They thought that they could get a better education at home. So that, although they didn't know that the girls were as talented as the boy, they nevertheless treated them as though they were. And they became the great pianists they are. Now this is really a study for somebody to follow through, because as far as I know they weren't the prodigies that Yehudi was, but they developed into very fine pianists.

Chall: They were talented. If the Ehrmans gave money to provide them a year or so abroad, the whole family, how did they manage to tutor their children, to give them piano lessons, on the father's Hebrew School teaching salary?

Rinder: Well, possibly others were helping during that time, which I doubt. He was being paid--and don't forget in those days prices were not what they are today--and I think the tutoring was done by people who were very much interested in this child prodigy and possibly they lowered their rates when they went to teach them.

Chall: Like Persinger?

Rinder: I'm sure Persinger was not receiving the amount he charged other pupils, if anything at all.

Chall: I see, so it was a labor of love all the way through.

Rinder: Yes, it must have been a labor of love. If there were others who helped, I wasn't aware of it. All I know at this time was of the Ehrmans. You see, this was so early in our career here in San Francisco--I was quite young then--I didn't take as deep an interest in these things as I did later when I was more aware of what was going on. I was busy with my own children and my household, and we were just friends who came and went to each other's homes occasionally, and that was all.

Yehudi was growing up, as far as I knew, and the little girls, like any other family. We didn't know that they'd reach the heights that they eventually did. One day recently we were looking through some book, my daughter and I, and there are some photographs.* We sat in wonder seeing this family, whom we knew, who used to come to our home and eat beef stew with us, to see the company they kept later. Yehudi and Enesco, Ciampi and Hephzibah, a picnic in Switzerland with Yaltah, Marutha, Hephzibah, Toscanini, Horowitz, Van Rossen, Piatigorsky, Lozinsky and Moshe. It's a good book, an interesting book.

Chall: Eventually they moved to Los Gatos.

Rinder: Yes. Soon Yehudi began playing and being paid very well, and Moshe, the father, was his manager, and he traveled along. The whole family traveled together. Wherever he went, the children and the parents were with him. That was one good thing about this family: they were together. It didn't break up the family as it did in other instances of which I will tell you later.

Also, the girls married quite young, you will remember. They happened to be in Australia when they met the children of one of the

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*Robert Magidoff, Yehudi Menuhin, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1955.

"Alma"
19750 Alma Bridge Road
Los Gatos, California
June 14, 1954

Rev. Reuben A. Rinder
3877 Jackson St.
San Francisco, California

Dear Friend:

After our long absence and wide travels we are back, the family unit complete, leading a quiet and entirely satisfying life up in the hills. Unfortunately, the time is fast approaching for our departure, and already by the middle of July we will have to leave. I have concerts in the East and in Europe.

Mr. Robert Magidoff, whom you have already met, is staying with us, and would like very much to see you again. If possible, on the afternoon of June 28th when he will be in San Francisco. Perhaps you could let me know if that would be convenient.

I hope one day we can exchange ideas and discuss our impressions of various countries and peoples, as I know you must have had many stimulating thoughts in the course of your recent trip.

Affectionate greetings, in which Diana joins, to you and your good wife.

Ever yours,

Yehudi

Rinder: most wealthy men there, a cattle rancher I think he was, and Yehudi married the daughter and Hephzibah married the son. The daughter was a charming beautiful young woman with titian hair, perfectly lovely, named Nola. And Hephzibah's husband was very charming too. We met them subsequently when they came to live here. When they returned--Yehudi was an adult then, and married--they built the house in Alma.

But some time before that, the family did move to Los Gatos. We saw them up there on the hill. It was a place which adjoined the Christian Brothers winery, and they became very good friends with the Christian Brothers. It was really quite interesting. My children would go and visit there and swim in the pool which the Menuhins had built. They became gradually very wealthy. Yehudi did so well and played constantly all over the world.

It was only after he married, of course, that he built his own home in Alma, above Los Gatos. And while he was gone, they had Gump's furnish it. I saw it after it was furnished. We were there to dinner one night. That was during the war, the beginning of the Second World War before we had entered it, but already help was scarce, and Yehudi's wife, Nola, did the cooking. She served us roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, which was simply superb. We had a very delightful evening. Many musicians were there, and Ingerson [Frank] and Dennison [George] were there, the artisans who built our Ark for the new Temple. Ingerson and Dennison lived right below them at Alma.

Chall: Then they were rather friendly people even though they kept a close relationship in the family.

Rinder: Oh, they had innumerable friends, and their friends were all interesting people, people who did things--artists, musicians, composers, writers, anybody who was creative and worthwhile was there. Baller [Adolph] his accompanist, had a little cottage which was built right on the grounds for him. They spent their summers in Alma. Perhaps they still do, in fact I know they still do, because when I have occasion to acknowledge a New Year's card which I receive from them every year, I address it to Alma and I know they receive it.

Chall: That's Yehudi. His parents still live there in Los Gatos, of course.

Rinder: Yes, they live in Los Gatos.

Chall: If his parents came here from Palestine, had they come from somewhere else first?

Rinder: Yes. They were Russian-born, from the Crimea. They met in Palestine, however. They were both, being from the Crimea, very fair--blue-eyed and blond-haired. That's why the children were so fair. Yehudi looked princely when he was a youngster. He used to wear little white satin blouses and black velvet pants. That was the uniform of child prodigies in those days.

Chall: I was wondering too about their attitude toward education. Did they really feel that a public education for their children wasn't the best thing?

Rinder: Yes.

Chall: Under any circumstances, do you think they would have reared them in this way?

Rinder: Indeed yes, because they started long before they realized that Yehudi was talented, or the girls either. But they wanted them to have music so they gave them music lessons.

Chall: And they wanted them taught privately?

Rinder: Yes, by tutors.

Chall: Where do you suppose they got this idea? It's European, I guess.

Rinder: Yes, it's European. They read Rousseau, I think, who wrote on child care, the raising of families, who sent his own children to orphanages! They read him and followed his advice and had the children tutored at home. Perhaps that might happen to any children if they were trained and tutored in that way. Who knows? Not a Yehudi. You could perhaps get somebody like the daughters to play the piano well if they spent five or six hours a day practicing, and they did.

Chall: The whole atmosphere is so isolated, and I can see why it would have to be isolated in a sense, but it's unique really. I suppose the children have suffered by it to some extent, but perhaps it doesn't really matter any more because they've contributed so much to the world.

Rinder: Well, it does matter. I don't think as they grew up that they were

Rinder: the happy human beings that they might have been. They weren't well-rounded; they hadn't had contacts. They were restricted and circumscribed throughout their young years, the years that count. All three of them were divorced; all three of them remarried. They have double sets of children. Of course, that's the way of the times throughout the world anyway, but they were young, at an age when this wasn't as common as it is today.

Chall: These children all their lives have been together. Even now in England, it's a family orchestra and school which is augmented by the community and others. They are unable, I would judge, to live without each other. I don't know that Yaltah is there, but Hephzibah and her family are.

Rinder: Yes, there is a very close relationship between those two. You're right, Yaltah is not as close, and she's lived away, down south for a while, I think. I wouldn't be surprised. You see, their friends and acquaintances were all hand-picked, and so naturally they saw only those whom the parents chose to have them meet.

Whether the parents went out of their way to contact these people, those were the people who were interested perhaps in music, people who would attend concerts and come back during intermission or after the concert to greet them. They would meet that way, or they might have been invited to the homes of these people.

For instance, Yaltah married the son of Stix, who was one of the important owners of Neiman-Marcus down south. But that didn't last very long. Yaltah was only sixteen when she was married, you see. The child had lived much less than most children of sixteen because she hadn't gone to school, she hadn't met other boys. She knew nothing about anything.

Chall: It's an interesting thing to look upon.

Rinder: But they were lovely. They were beautiful girls with beautiful white gorgeous skin, and lovely blond hair, and charming in every way. They spoke differently because of the different languages they had. They spoke Hebrew, of course, because that was their early language, but they dropped that subsequently. I don't think they ever speak it now. But that colored their other languages, even English. There is a slight foreign accent, as children would have who speak another language first. Then they spoke French fluently.

The Godchaux--there were two sisters--the Godchaux sisters, one of whom taught them French and the other arithmetic and mathematics. They were very, very good friends. They corresponded with the children continually in French when they were away, and of course that

Rinder: improved their French. Then they lived abroad so much that they acquired all these languages by living in different countries--Switzerland, France, Italy, wherever they went. So they've had a very full, rich life, regardless of the fact that they didn't have contacts when they were young. They've had plenty and mingled with the highest and the greatest and the most important people in the world wherever they've gone. It's been really a very wonderful and glamorous life they've had.

Chall: What was the mother like?

Rinder: She was a very strong personality. She was the matriarch of the family originally. She would sit there evenings when the house was full of guests, sit in her armchair looking like a queen reigning over this household. She was really an astounding person, very firm with the children. Both of them were.

When they lived on Steiner Street, they rented out the upper floors to lodgers, and they put up a tent in the yard for the children to sleep in. It was both for their health and for the money. That was one way they made some money to live besides the little Moshe earned teaching. You see, that was really a very low, modest beginning, wasn't it? They slept in tents outside. And in rainy weather, they'd hurry in, you can imagine, running into the house. But it was good for their health apparently, because they thrived under it and grew to be beautiful children.

Chall: Except for Yehudi's asthma.

Rinder: Yes, it wasn't too good for that, I suppose, but their lives were just centered around the children. There was just nothing else for them. Perhaps it was a good thing; perhaps it was not. Who knows? As you say, they've lived a very full and interesting life, and that's as much as anybody can wish for.

Chall: Well, they've given pleasure to the people of the world.

Rinder: They've given pleasure to thousands, millions of people.

Miriam Solovieff

Chall: I don't know whether you saw this article which I cut from the paper [San Francisco Chronicle, November 5, 1968]. You may have been away at the time. It's about Miss Solovieff, but it indicated a rather tragic beginning in her life.

Rinder: [Looking at newspaper article and picture] Let's see, when is this? November. Oh, was I away then? Or did I see her? I saw her last in Paris quite a number of years ago.

Chall: I don't know whether you had left yet.

Rinder: No, we didn't leave until toward the end of November, and this is November 5, I see. Isn't it strange that I have no recollection of it?

Chall: I think she was apparently just visiting a sister, and how much time she spent visiting old friends, I don't know. At least the newspaper knew she was here. Do you want to talk about her?

Rinder: Well, actually, we didn't have too much to do with her career. What would happen most often was that the mothers would bring their talented children to my husband, who, as I think I have said before, was in quite a strategic position. He was a musician and situated so that he could call upon friends who were well-to-do and who were very generous, and who might help these children. Most of them needed financial assistance to continue their education and their training in the particular talent which they happened to possess.

So Mrs. Solovieff brought Miriam to my husband at the time, and he thought that indeed she did have a talent and by all means to continue her training. And I forget at the moment just how much he was involved with her career--not nearly so much as with the others, you know, like Isaac Stern and Yehudi. I don't remember much more about her, except that there was a great tragedy in her life afterwards, as you may recall. Does it tell about it?

Ruth Slenczynski

Rinder: About that same time, we came in contact with Ruth Slenczynski and her family, and that really was quite an interesting contact. I remember the father brought her to our home one day. She was about five years old, and he brought with him an extension of the foot pedal for the piano so that she could reach that. She sat down and played, and we were all amazed, of course, because even by then the child already was playing marvelously well. Let's see, who was her teacher?

Chall: I don't know, but I have a note here that five people were listening to her in a hotel room locally, and Mr. Joseph Hoffman was outside the door. Cantor Rinder and Alice Seckels were in the hotel

Chall: room listening to her, and afterwards Mr. Hoffman said that he would give her a scholarship to the Curtis Institute; and so her father said that they would go there for a year of study.*

Who was Miss Seckels?

Rinder: Well, she was an impressario. She booked people; that was her function here in the community. She booked people for concerts and contacted them, so that she knew most of the artists in the world who came to San Francisco. And she was very much interested in many of these children who had any talent, so that's where she comes in.

There again, I don't know whether the Slenczynskis needed financial aid and whether my husband was instrumental in getting it. I wouldn't be surprised. It was at a time when my children were young and I was very busy with them, and there were many activities which I didn't know too much about.

Chall: This was about 1930 too.

Rinder: 1930, yes. I remember Ruth coming to our home a number of times with her father. The father was a strange man. He would sit at this piano watching her very closely, very sternly. He wasn't very gentle with her. He was rather strict--we all thought much too strict--and it was as though she played mechanically almost as he sat there at the piano watching her play. He supervised her practice; he was with her constantly, so much so that there was a rift afterwards. I mean, she just couldn't stand it. Didn't she write a book about him?

Chall: Yes, she did.

Rinder: And she tells <u>all</u> there. He was a very bad influence in her life really, because as she grew older she was a very unhappy young woman. She played very well. Music became her career, and she concertized extensively. She left San Francisco after a while. We lost track of her except that we hear of her occasionally. But there she was. I mean, there was this period where one child after another sprang up--from where? Out of the blue, with this talent, and it was really remarkable. This hasn't happened since. It was just over a certain period, one after another.

Chall: About a decade.

Rinder: Yes. And so she was one of them.

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*<u>Jewish Journal</u>, March 5, 1930.

Chall: What was Mrs. Slenczynski like? Did anybody ever meet her? Did you know her?

Rinder: Yes, but I don't recall so I can't say. I told you my memory wasn't too good.

Isaac Stern

Chall: Isaac Stern then, although I don't know that he comes next chronologically.

Rinder: Oh yes. And we haven't spoken of him, have we?

Chall: No, we haven't.

Rinder: Well, he's really very close to my heart. I love him very dearly. He's remained a very good friend. He was a young boy whose father had been, I think, an artist, a real artist, in Russia, but when he came here he had to earn a living, and so he became a house painter. Subsequently the paint settled in his chest and he died of tuberculosis.

Isaac showed a certain amount of talent, and there too, the parents brought him to my husband one day, and he started by playing the piano. Oh, he was about seven or eight at the time. He was not a child prodigy; he just had this talent--not prodigious like some of the others, like Yehudi or Ruth Slenczynski, who really was phenomenal for her years. She gave a concert at the age of six at one of the theaters, and everybody went mad about her.

But not Isaac. After he played for a while, my husband saw that he seemed rather clumsy at the piano. He tested his hearing capacity; he found that he had perfect pitch. So he said, "You know, I think he might be better on the violin. Why don't we try it?" So then and there my husband took mother and child downtown and they bought him a little violin. My husband bought the bow, and the mother bought the violin, and they arranged lessons for him.

Chall: On the back of an autographed portrait of young Stern and a man wearing glasses, is a notation (possibly written by your husband): "Isaac Stern and Robert Polak, to whom Cantor Rinder brought Isaac Stern for his first lesson." Who was Robert Polak and why was he chosen?

Rinder: Robert Polak was concertmaster with our symphony and an excellent

211 Central Park West
New York 24, New York
January 6, 1963

Cantor Reuben Rinder
Temple Emanuel
San Francisco, California

My dear Rob,

First of all, most affectionate wishes to you and the family for a healthy and happy New Year. Incidentally, our family will increase with another child expected the end of May.

I wonder if you could do me a favor. You may remember that when I was in San Francisco last November, a member of the Congregation found my old record book when I was a member of the Temple Religious School in 1929, and sent it on to me. I can't for the life of me remember her name or address, and thus was unable to thank her for her thoughtfulness. Would you be an angel and thank her for me or send me her address so that I can write a proper note?

I hope to see you when I am in San Francisco in mid-February. Until then, most fond greetings.

As ever,

Isaac Stern

Rinder: teacher. I think they paid a dollar for a lesson in those days. And he made headway; he did very well. And then it was my poor husband's job to try and get people interested in Isaac because there was very little money for lessons. And so he got one or two people interested--Mrs. Isadore Zellerbach, the mother of Harold Zellerbach, Harold and J. D. Do you remember J. D., who later became our ambassador to Italy?

Chall: Yes.

Rinder: Mrs. Isadore Zellerbach helped Isaac out for a couple of years. And then she thought that Isaac would never make it, so she quit. Then my husband contacted Lutie Goldstein, Miss Lutie Goldstein, a patron of the arts who had been very much interested in Yehudi Menuhin and who, he thought, might become interested in Isaac also. And he had them meet here at our home and she listened to him. And she too was a little skeptical. She didn't think he would quite make it. But my husband begged her to try for a year or two and see what would come of it. And she did. And almost every few years he'd have to interest her further, because Isaac made not the phenomenal progress that some of the others did. He just went along gradually, practicing and working diligently.

Chall: Did he change teachers?

Rinder: Oh yes. By then or shortly thereafter, he changed to Naoum Blinder, our concertmaster with the symphony. And Lutie Goldstein continued to help him. Well, finally, at the age of about sixteen or seventeen, he gave his first concert. And then it was obvious that he really was making good. And Lutie was very happy then, and she continued to help him until he became world-renowned. He began playing various places all over the world, and today he's considered one of the greatest. She lived to reap her reward because she was really very proud of him, as we all were.

He developed not only musically but in every way. He became a wonderful human being, taking an interest in the downtrodden and the underdog, so-called, and various civil liberties and Jewish problems in Israel. And he was always willing to attend meetings for bonds for Israel if it helped in any way. And to this day he continues to be a great artist and a great human being.

Chall: He grew up then in a natural way.

Rinder: In a very natural way, yes. He went to school; he went to Sunday School; he met children normally as other children do, and he really had a much more normal background than Yehudi ever did, you see. Therefore, he's a much more rounded, well-adjusted human being.

Chall: I see. And you still keep in touch with him when he's around?

Rinder: Oh yes. Yes, I receive a Christmas card every year with pictures of his wife and children, and I see them growing up and developing. And he contacts me when he comes to San Francisco, and I contact them when I go there. It's been a very friendly relationship.

Chall: Did he have other brothers and sisters in the area?

Rinder: Yes, he had a sister, but she wasn't talented particularly and we lost track of her. If you're not talented, you're just useless. [Laughter]

Leon Fleisher

Chall: Well, I have the names of other people who seemed to possess talent. There was Leon Fleisher.

Rinder: Yes. He too came first to our attention as a little boy, and once again, his parents were told that yes, it was worth continuing, that he did have a talent and by all means to go ahead; and if he needed help I'm sure my husband got it for him because that was the easiest thing he could do here. It seems that people trusted him to the extent that they were willing to help wherever he thought help was needed. It was really remarkable because, as I will tell you later, whenever he put on any musical event in the Temple, the simplest thing in the world for him was to procure funds to cover the expenses.

Chall: A great gift. Fund-raising is not easy.

Rinder: Yes, a great gift.

Boris and Naoum Blinder

Chall: We've already mentioned the Blinders. There were two of them, and I think they remained primarily in the San Francisco area, Boris and Naoum?

Rinder: Yes. They played in the symphony orchestra. Naoum was here first. He was the violinist, and he was here for a great many years, until

Rinder: he retired. Boris came later, oh, many years later than his brother. He was a cellist. He was retired at the age of sixty-five when there was a change of conductors and a change was made all around. They retired many of the players who had been there for a great many years. The new director felt they needed new blood and younger people so they retired the older ones.

Chall: Were they brothers?

Rinder: Yes. They're--both of them--very fine musicians.

The Composers of the Synagogue Services

Chall: Let's talk about those other composers who were commissioned to write various Services. Ernest Bloch was commissioned in 1929 and his Sacred Service was performed here in 1938. It was not until 1948 that Darius Milhaud received a commission to write a Service. And then there followed performances of Marc Lavry, in 1955, and Paul Ben-Haim, in 1962. And in between was Frederick Jacobi.

But before we go into these, I was wondering why there was such a long period between Bloch and Milhaud, and whether this indicated that Rabbi Reichert wasn't interested. Is it significant that for more than twenty years there was nothing commissioned?

Rinder: No, no. Don't forget that these commissions were really not given by the congregation as such. It was my husband's idea each time. And at the time Ernest Bloch was commissioned, he happened to be living here in San Francisco. He was head of the music conservatory, he was at hand, and my husband thought, "Now here's this great composer living in our midst. Why shouldn't we commission him to write a Service for the Temple?"

He was always interested in getting new material, and there was so little of it to be had. Nobody in the world was composing for the synagogue, just perhaps a few unknowns, but no great composer. And so he felt this was an opportunity. You see, the reason Rob didn't commission anybody in between is that there was no outstanding Jewish composer. Do you know of any? No. Perhaps Aaron Copland was around, but we never thought of him as one who would have--he could have, I suppose, but he was so modern, you know, that we hesitated. After all, a Service should be somewhat in the tradition of the synagogue. And while Milhaud's was certainly much less traditional than Ernest Bloch's, it has the artistic restraint and

Rinder: the dignity so right for a Service.

Darius Milhaud

Rinder: And so time passed, until we had occasion to meet Mr. Milhaud intimately. You see, he teaches at Mills College. We met him personally, and he used to come to our home. He was here at seder once when my husband thought this was the time, and he mentioned it to one of our friends who happened to be present that evening--that wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if a man like Milhaud wrote a Service for the Temple? Here we have him right in our midst. And she said, "That is wonderful." She turned to him and she said, "Mr. Milhaud, I commission you to write this Service."

Chall: Who was this?

Rinder: Clara Heller, Mrs. Edward S. Heller.

Chall: And what was Mr. Milhaud's reaction on the spur of the moment?

Rinder: He was delighted. And while it took Ernest Bloch over a year to write his--he went to Switzerland, as I think I told you, to write his and finally returned with it--Milhaud left for Paris, as he does every other year (you know, he teaches at Mills College one year and then goes back to Paris and home for the following year), and about two months later we heard that the Service was finished!

He's very prolific, and he writes constantly and writes very well. So this Service was completed and as soon as we could have it printed, it was performed.

Chall: Did Milhaud conduct from a wheel chair, do you recall?

Rinder: No, he was able to stand up. His arthritis had not crippled him yet. Today he propels himself around entirely in his wheel chair.

Chall: Do you recall how the Service was received?

Rinder: It was very well received. I remember seeing reviews by Fried and Frankenstein. They considered it one of Milhaud's outstanding works.

Chall: What kind of a person is Mr. Milhaud?

Rinder: Oh, a delightful, typically French person. Rather shy, an

D. MILHAUD
MILLS COLLEGE
OAKLAND 13, CALIFORNIA

3-1-57

Dear Dr. Rinder.

Here is the "Proverb" piece. I would like that it is printed as written, with the three languages. I join a typewritten copy of the french - to make it easier for the printer. I separated the syllables because in french it is not the same kind of separation as used in english. For instance the word separation in english is sep-ar-a-tion. In french it is se'-pa-ra-tion. and so on ---

Very sincerely

Darius Milhaud

Rinder: introvert in a way, genial, mainly interested in music, as most musicians are, of course, speaks English much better now than he once did, fairly well because he has to--after all, he teaches. And so does his wife, Madeleine; she teaches French drama, and she's quite a personage in her own right.

Chall: You have enjoyed his friendship?

Rinder: Oh yes, to this day. Now whether they're in Paris, or wherever they are, they send us flowers for Pesach. You see, they're Jewish, both of them.

Chall: Yes, I see. And their primary contact with Jewish people has been here in the San Francisco community, if they had any at all?

Rinder: I don't think they are affiliated with any Jewish organizations or synagogues; I'm sure of that. But they used to come to services for the High Holy Days whenever I'd invite them and were very much interested. And one cute thing--at seder here he sings "One Only Kid," in French, Provencal. He hasn't much of a singing voice but it's charming, you know. So that was always his part in the seder service.

Frederick Jacobi

Chall: Who is Frederick Jacobi, whose Service was performed in 1932?

Rinder: We gave it at a regular Friday evening service. It is not a composition like the others at all. But he was the brother of Mrs. Marco Hellman, Sr. They were members of the congregation, and the whole family was very generous to the congregation, and when this Service was completed we thought it would be very interesting for the community to hear it. But it wasn't commissioned by us at all.

Marc Lavry

Chall: In 1955, Marc Lavry's Sacred Service was performed. How did that come about?

Rinder: Well, when we went to Israel, in 1953, we met Marc Lavry. And it

FREDERICK JACOBI
5000 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE
RIVERDALE, NEW YORK 63, N. Y

Post Office Box 52
Keene Valley,Essex County,New York

June 12,1952

Dear Reuben:

Many thanks for yours of May 28th;I should have answered sooner except for the fact that our last days in New York were so busy ones and we actually have just gotten settled here where we hope to remain for about three months.

I was interested in what you said about my Service,particularly as a publisher had told me they expected to be able to use it in Reform as well as ~~Orthodox~~ Conservative Synagogues.I know that all the prayers you need are included in my Service except V'Shomru and Adon Olom .For this latter it was my impression that Ono B'koach might be substituted.And as for the V'Shomru one might use my old one..or I might compose a new one especially for you.However,you are the best judge of what you could,or could not,use.As I told Dan,my Service was written to be heard as a whole and as part of the regular service rather than as a concert offering.(in contradistinction to Milhaud and especially Bloch who certainly had his eye on the concert platform as well as on the altar!).But I think that a compromise might be feasible.In the first place,the fact that the concert you are planning is to take place in a Synagogue gives us right away the proper atmosphere.Then, if you give a good portion of my work(perhaps of 35 minutes),carefully selected, and perhaps interspersed it at a few intervals with prayers (which you could read: the English translations,perhaps,of the number which is to follow)...we might be able to give something pretty much akin to what I had in mind.Many of the solos might be sung by a tenor solo;I might be able to find one suitable,perhaps,for a soprano;and so,if carefully thought out,we might be able to please both you and me.I think it would be foolish to try to give any other work by me on this program;but (if I may suggest it) if you had the first half of your program ancient and medieval,as you suggest,and the second half my new work I think it might end up by being something interesting and representative.

Your plans for King David sound admirable and I wish I were to be with you on June 30th.My own plans for coming to San Francisco are vague.I should like to visit my sister ,Frances Hellman,before too much time of the coming Fall has elapsed and would love to combine this with hearing of my work and being present when you gave it if that were possible.Therefore,without in any sense wishing to hurry your decision,I like very much to know your plans when you have them made (even if they do not include a presentation of my Arvit l'Shabbat)... so that I may make mine.

Irene joins me in sending best greetings to you and Mrs Rinder.I hope you are embarking on a pleasant summer.This spot is lovely and it has been so cold up here since we arrived two days ago (fires going all the time) that one might have imagined onesself in San Francisco in the summer time!

Always faithfully yours

Fred

Rinder: was then that my husband commissioned him. He offered him a thousand dollars of his own money, thinking that if he couldn't collect it he would be glad to give it; and Marc Lavry was delighted with that because, after all, that was a lot of money in '53 in Israel.

While we were there, the Israeli pound was devalued, so that they had three pounds for one dollar; a thousand dollars was equal to three thousand pounds, which was a great deal of money then. And so Lavry went to work and wrote his Service, also a big composition. It was given here a couple of years later [March 11, 1955]. Thanks to Mr. Dan Koshland, who collected so much money, we were able to send for Lavry and his wife to be present at the performance, which he conducted.

Chall: That was exciting.

Rinder: It was really very exciting. And it's a very delightful Service. There are parts that are reminiscent of Arabic and desert music, you know, and very, very charming. Very different from the others, as you can imagine, and very delightful. It has the imprint of the Middle East. There's almost an Arabic rhythm here and there that you can detect.

It's definitely different from Milhaud's, very different, and also from Bloch's. Each one of them is individually oriented to their own background. Ernest Bloch's is much more Jewish in the Jewish sense as we know it. Milhaud's is lighter and more French. Lavry's is typically Middle Eastern. Some of the parts are almost like dance music, as a matter of fact.

Chall: Is it taken from folk music?

Rinder: They all do that, somewhat.

Chall: Cultures are different, even Jewish cultures, depending on where they are.

Rinder: That's what makes it so interesting. Each one is so different from the other. And this was a fine thing for Mr. and Mrs. Lavry that they came here. They stayed three or four weeks and they had a wonderful vacation. And I know there was enough money left after expenses for them to be given a further honorarium other than the thousand dollars that was originally promised them.

Chall: Isn't that fine? So your husband must have come back and got not only the money he had promised--the one thousand dollars--from other sources, but all that was needed.

Rinder: Yes, oh yes. Because it costs about five thousand to put on a

CONGREGATION EMANU-EL
ARGUELLO BOULEVARD AND LAKE STREET
SAN FRANCISCO

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE

OF

"THE SACRED SERVICE"

BY

MARC LAVRY

IN CELEBRATION OF THE

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF CONGREGATION EMANU-EL

DÉSIRÉ LIGETI, *Bass-Baritone*
THE A CAPPELLA CHOIR OF THE SAN FRANCISCO STATE COLLEGE
DR. JOHN CARL TEGNELL, *Director*
THE CHOIR OF TEMPLE EMANU-EL
MEMBERS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
REUBEN R. RINDER, *Recitant*
MARC LAVRY, *Conductor*
LUDWIG ALTMAN, *At the Organ*

FRIDAY EVENING AT 8:15
MARCH ELEVENTH • NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE

Rinder: performance of this kind, and we had more than that.

Chall: Well, the Temple Emanu-El has been the scene of some very interesting musical events.

Rinder: Rob was here for fifty-three years, you see. That's a lifetime, several lifetimes.

Chall: Creative all the time. What kind of a person is Mr. Lavry? Do you recall him?

Rinder: Oh, he was a delightful person with a fine sense of humor, a handsome man. He was head of the Israeli Symphony of the Air and that's how we got to know him there. He was known throughout the country, of course, a big name in Israel, but I think this really made him more than anything else because it was such an important event in his life.

Chall: Did he speak English?

Rinder: Not too well. When we first met him, my husband and he conversed in German mainly. By the time he came here, he knew a little English. He came here a number of times and each time his English had improved. His wife spoke English very well and she would translate when necessary.

Paul Ben-Haim

Rinder: Then we went to Israel again in '62. See, there's another long period, quite a period, in between, when we thought that once again something should be done. So Rob went to Ben-Haim, who is a very fine composer, and since we had so many Services by then, my husband thought that it would be sufficient to have something just, say, some anthems for the closing services of the Holidays. We needed a closing anthem.

So he chose three psalms--no, I don't think that he chose them. He went to Ben-Haim and together they selected the psalms that would be most appropriate. And I remember they spent many a day there talking it over, and it was really a very wonderful relationship because Ben-Haim is a very charming, delightful person. He spoke English fortunately, so we were able to get along together and converse and discuss these things. Unfortunately, he has not been to the United States.

PAUL BEN-HAIM

TEL-AVIV, 9.12.63
11, ABARONOWITZSTREET

Dear Mr. Rinder,

I was so happy to have News from you when I received your Kind lette.; I hope you and Mrs. Rinder are feeling well and remember sometimes the nice days we spent together, in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv!

I did not receive until now the Tapes; I suppose they will arrive soon, and I will direct them to Dr Gradenwitz, because only he has a Tape-recorder (I don't have one!). I am very anxious to listen to this memorable performance. By the way — the 3 Psalms will have their Israel First Performance in spring 1964 with Choir and Orchestra of our Broadcasting Station in Jerusalem and First-class Soloists; it will give me a great joy and satisfaction to listen to a life-performance of those pieces which I composed for you.

In the mean time I wish you and Mrs Rinder all the best for the coming year 1964 and remain with kindest regards,

very cordially yours,

Paul Ben-Haim

P. S. Dr Gradenwitz was informed about your

Rinder: And so he composed these three psalms and sent them on to us. By that time we had quite a collection of compositions, you see. So for the occasion, some big occasion--I think it was to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of my husband's tenure in the Temple--they gave excerpts from the various Services and then concluded with the "Three Psalms," by Ben-Haim, which made a tremendous evening, as you can imagine, just wonderful. The Psalms are very beautiful. We hear them off and on now at the conclusion of a Sabbath service, and I recognize them (which pleases me).

So you see how this has enriched the liturgy of the synagogue to have all this beautiful music, which otherwise would not be in existence because it would never have occurred, apparently, to any of these men to have written a Service.

Chall: No. That isn't where the interest has been during the last twenty-five years or so.

Rinder: No, that isn't where the money is or the livelihood. It wouldn't have paid them, nor would they have thought of it.

Chall: Mr. Altman said that your husband had contacted Bernstein [Leonard], and there might have been somebody else, I've forgotten; and these people had turned him down. This is not the area in which they're composing nowadays. So Mr. Altman feels that you were fortunate to have got the composers at the time when they were willing to write for the synagogue, even if they wouldn't have thought of it themselves.

Rinder: Well, certainly.

Chall: He showed me, in the closet, all the music in the rack and in your husband's study and said that every now and then they do portions of the commissioned Services.

Rinder: Oh yes. So of course it was very gratifying to have done this--for the composers, for the congregation, for Jewry at large, and certainly for my husband, who felt that his contact here with the congregation had not been in vain, that it hadn't been just another job for him but had been a way of life, a creative life, really, in a great many ways.

The Symphony Conductors

Chall: He left behind a living memorial. In your contacts with the various

Chall: musicians in the area, did you know Pierre Monteux and Alfred Hertz well?

Rinder: Yes, certainly. We met them personally, all of them. They were characters and very interesting. Alfred Hertz, with his great big beard when nobody was wearing beards, bald as a billiard ball on top and all the hair that should have been on the head on his face--he was quite a character. Big, stocky--well, not too tall but stockily built--who walked with a limp and a cane, kind of limped along, he was a great conductor. Everybody loved him.

Pierre Monteux, yes, we knew him quite well. He had come to the house a number of times, a very charming person. Who came after him? We got to know most of the conductors.

Chall: I think Jorda came after.

Rinder: Jorda--we were very good friends of Jorda. He came to seder here once, he and his wife. He had an English wife. He was Catholic and loved religious ceremonials, and he was simply thrilled with the seder.

Other Musical Performances

Rinder: I'd like to say a few words about the annual musical events that my husband put on at the Temple. These were community affairs, really. They were open to the public free of charge and usually consisted of an oratorio by Handel or by any of the well-known musicians who have written oratorios that were suitable for the synagogue.

One time he gave "Israel in Egypt," in conjunction with the Stanford University Chorus. It was given twice. One time they came to us with their chorus, so it was a double chorus. They had about a hundred voices, of their students, and we had a hundred. There were two hundred people in this thing. Then the following week, our chorus went to Stanford University, and it was given there. It was a magnificent occasion, wonderful performance and wonderful write-up and it was really very exhilarating. Everybody enjoyed it.

Every year some musical affair of this sort was given at the Temple that really proved very interesting. Some of our soloists then were renowned. One was Nelson Eddy, the one who used to sing with MacDonald [Jeanette].

"Israel in Egypt"

An Oratorio

by

Handel

With the combined Choirs of Stanford University and Temple Emanu-El

MEMORIAL CHURCH, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Monday Evening, January 23rd, 1928, at 8 P.M.

The 25th Anniversary of the Dedication

Directed by

WARREN D. ALLEN

TEMPLE EMANU-EL

San Francisco

Friday Evening, January 27th, 1928, at 8 P.M.

Directed by

CANTOR REUBEN R. RINDER

WALLACE A. SABIN, *Organist*

SOLOISTS
(at Stanford University)

VIOLET COWGER, *Soprano*
ZELIE VAISSADE, *Soprano*
RUTH W. ANDERSON, *Alto*
HUGH WILLIAMS, *Tenor*
JAMES ISHERWOOD, *Bass*
P. H. WARD, *Bass*

SOLOISTS
(at Temple Emanu-El)

ZELIE VAISSADE, *Soprano*
ESTHER H. ALLEN, *Contralto*
HUGH WILLIAMS, *Tenor*
JAMES ISHERWOOD, *Bass*
P. H. WARD, *Bass*

MRS. EDWARD YOUNG AND GRIFFITH WILLIAMS, *Pianists*

Orchestra Selected from the San Francisco Symphony

ORLEY SEE, *Concertmaster*

Chall: Did he come here or was he living here?

Rinder: No. He was sent for and came up from Los Angeles, where he used to make those movies with Miss MacDonald. He said he enjoyed singing in the oratorios so much he hoped some day when he had enough money he would retire from movies and go into church music. But he never did, of course, as you know.

Chall: How was all this financed--Eddy and other renowned soloists and the one hundred person choir?

Rinder: Oh yes, it had to be financed. Those were the times when my husband would go to Mr. Daniel Koshland and say, "We're putting this on." And he would find the money for us. The easiest thing in our congregation was to get money at one time; people were so generous.

Chall: Were these events you're telling me about before the Depression?

Rinder: Yes, all these were before the Depression.

A writer came here one day many years ago to write an article on the Jews of San Francisco, and somebody suggested that he contact my husband because he would know more about them perhaps than anybody. So throughout the interview, Rob kept saying, "There's no place like San Francisco," as he would talk about the various people and how generous they were and what they did, and so on. "And there's no place like San Francisco" became the topic of this writer's article which he wrote for the Menorah Journal.

Chall: So that after the Depression set in these annual events really weren't annual anymore?

Rinder: No, just occasional.

Chall: I have a note here about a concert of sacred music which was sponsored by the San Francisco Conference of Christians and Jews in the War Memorial Opera House in 1941.* That was the second annual one, and it was comprised of choruses from a Catholic and a Presbyterian Church, and the Temple. Now, that was a little different. How many annual ones of this kind were there? That's rather an unusual sort of thing for Brotherhood Week.

Rinder: Yes. But that was the only one of its kind as far as I remember. We participated, of course, with our choir. When we augmented a choir, of course the hundred-odd people who came were volunteers.

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*Emanu-El and The Jewish Journal, May 2, 1941.

"Judas Maccabaeus"

An Oratorio

by

Handel

In Honor of the Eightieth Anniversary
of the Founding of Congregation Emanu-El

Rendered by a
Chorus of Sixty-five Voices.

Directed by

CANTOR REUBEN R. RINDER

TEMPLE EMANU-EL

San Francisco

Friday Evening, January 24th, 1930, at 8:00 o'clock

SOLOISTS

Raymond Marlowe, *Tenor*
James Isherwood, *Baritone*
Margaret Piggott, *Soprano*
Zelie Vaissade, *Soprano*
Eva Atkinson, *Alto*
Ruth Anderson, *Alto*
Henry L. Perry, *Bass*
Doris Whitmore, *Soprano*

WALLACE A. SABIN, *Organist*

Mrs. Edward E. Young at the Piano

The Boys' Choir is participating in the rendition of the third part of the Oratorio, through the courtesy of Grace Cathedral.

The Orchestra ensemble consists of members selected from the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

Rinder: We advertised in the daily press and the news journals stating that we would have this chorus, and it's surprising how many volunteered to come and rehearse for six weeks or so and participate because they enjoyed singing. It was only the soloists and our own singers of the choir who were paid when these concerts were given.

It's interesting to know that the Union of San Francisco Musicians has an allowance for occasions of this sort. They pay up to twenty musicians to participate. If you need more, you have to pay them. That includes one rehearsal only. If you want more rehearsals or an extended time, you pay for that. Otherwise, there is one rehearsal and the performance. That was a great help, of course. It's very expensive to employ that many musicians. But they came, and they enjoyed it, and of course it added considerably to have these symphony musicians and a huge chorus. The Temple is a wonderful setting for any musical event, as you can imagine.

Chall: Honegger's "King David" was presented four times: twice in the Temple, in 1949 and in 1952, and twice in the Opera House, 1933 and 1935. Each time your husband was Narrator--and well received in the role. Was this one of his favorite roles? And was it a favorite role of various singers? Why was this done four times, for example?

Rinder: Well, it was done twice in the Opera House because they considered it, I suppose, a very fine and interesting piece of music. It was done at the Temple because it is, after all, Jewish in content--King David was the King of the Jews. It's a wonderful piece, musically, simply marvelous. It was once given in Napa, where my husband also was the recitant. The recitant has much to do in it. It's a very important part.

Chall: I noticed in one review that Cantor Rinder was considered outstanding in this particular role.

Rinder: Oh yes. At the Opera House he had no loudspeaker before him and his voice rang out above the orchestra and above the singers. There's one part that's very dramatic.

Chall: In this review by Marjorie Fisher (unfortunately, I can't tell what newspaper it was in or the date), she says, "Perhaps the most thrilling episode was Reuben Rinder's reading of the 'Incantation of the Witch of Endor.'" Is that the one?

Rinder: That's what I meant, yes.

Chall: Whatever became of the planned annual contests for the Society for the Advancement of Synagogue Music which first sponsored an award in 1928? The first prize was won by a Frenchman, Ermand Bonnal,

May - 1935

Municipal Forces Triumph In Honegger's 'King David'

Orchestra, Chorus, Reuben Rinder, Emily Hardy, Eva Gruninger, Raymond Marlowe, Do Fine Work Under Hertz' Baton

BY MARJORY M. FISHER
The News Music Editor

The incomparable magnificence of Arthur Honegger's symphonic oratorio was demonstrated a second time to a San Francisco audience in the War Memorial Opera House last night. A little more than a year has elapsed since its grandeur was first revealed to us, and last night's performance confirmed the opinion expressed at that time: That "King David" is a colossal achievement, both in itself and in performance.

Alfred Hertz has given us no finer symphonic-choral presentation than he did last night. It was the climactic achievement of the Art Commission's current series of concerts.

From the orchestral introduction, which was immeasurably enhanced by the beautiful playing of Naoum Blinder in the violin solo, to the impressive finale beautifully sung by Emily Hardy and chorus against the fine orchestral background, "King David" held the attention of auditors and thrilled them many times by its beauty and by the extraordinary skill with which much of it was performed.

Rinder Thrills

Perhaps the most thrilling episode was Reuben Rinder's reading of the "Incantation of the Witch of Endor." As narrator throughout the entire work, he gave an extraordinary example of musical declamation that had both intonation and rhythm and tremendous dramatic power without ever actually turning into what is commonly termed "song!"

Emily Hardy, exquisite to look upon, did some exquisite singing in her soprano solos. Her voice has never sounded more beautiful than it did last night, despite a slight cold that marred her first aria. The score offered her opportunities to reveal the lovely lyric quality of her voice, and its tessitura lay within Miss Hardy's natural and best vocal range.

Miss Gruninger was also in her best voice and its warm quality was effectively revealed in her opening "Song of David." She, too, did the best singing she has done in many months. It was good to hear.

Chorus Triumphs

Raymond Marlowe had less to do, but did the tenor arias commendably even though his diction was less clear than that of his associates.

The chorus triumphed. Hans Leschke, its director, deserves a full share of the credit for its extraordinary accomplishment. Not only did it sing excellently and accurately with good tone quality, but it had the additional virtue of projecting the words in intelligible fashion. What Dr. Leschke has accomplished with this group of volunteer singers amounts to a miracle!

And so we say "bravo" to everyone concerned—from Alfred Hertz down to the last singer and last player. It was not impeccable, but it was as fine a performance as one could possibly expect under existing circumstances.

Chall: for "Odon Olom." Is this still used in Temple Emanu-El?

Rinder: No, that is not used. Interestingly enough, the runner-up was so much more delightful that my husband gave it at the close of every Rosh Hashonah Service until a new Cantor was elected ten years ago.

Mr. Bonnal's composition was better technically, I suppose, because it was chosen by a group of fine professional musicians, but the second best was more tuneful and truly was beautiful.

Bronislaw Huberman: The Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra

Rinder: Huberman was due here for a concert [1935] and he and my husband were having lunch at the St. Francis when Huberman outlined his plan to organize an orchestra with the Jewish first desk men of European orchestras who had had to leave because the Hitler regime was playing havoc with the orchestras throughout the world. My husband thought this was a marvelous idea.

He said to him, "Why don't you go ahead and do it?" Huberman said, "Well, we have no money." Rob said, "Why don't we begin right now and let's do something about it?" And he left the table and called up a number of people and came back with about five thousand dollars pledged to him right then and there.

Then he spoke to Mrs. M. C. Sloss, who subsequently had a meeting at her home at which Ernest Bloch spoke and more pledges were made. I think Mr. Huberman went away with about ten thousand dollars from this visit. On the strength of that, New York followed suit and there they formed a committee and collected many thousands of dollars and the Isareli Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra was then formed and has continued to this day.

Chall: I noted that your husband and Mrs. Marcus Koshland, as well as Mrs. Sloss, were on the board of directors of the organization that was subsequently developed in order to support this symphony. I mean the Palestine Orchestra Fund, Incorporated. What kinds of duties were involved?

Rinder: Well, it was chiefly fund-raising and the organization was centered in New York, where most of the funds were collected.

Chall: Can you tell me anything about Mr. Huberman? You had quite a correspondence with him.

BRONISLAW HUBERMAN

RIVERDALE, New York 63, N.Y.
595 West 239th Street
Telephone: Kingsbridge 3-2171

March 31st 1944

Dear Mr. Rinder:

It is a long time since we have not heard from each other. But I have not forgotten your interest and help in my endeavours for the Palestine Orchestra amongst our friends on the Pacific Coast; and the pleasant days spent with you on the trip to Carmel are amongst my most cherished memories here of those years.

As you can see from the enclosed copy of a speech recently held, my interest in Palestine has not diminished, in the contrary. And I am sure of a similar process in your own feelings. - I am looking forward to the moment when we can again exchange our views on that problem and so many others.

I hope this opportunity may arise during my next winter's visit to California. My manager has booked me for some concerts. But so far San Frnacisco has not yet been includéd. Let's hope that my friends will do something about it. For this purpose I enclose also a few press cuttings.

Hoping that you and Mrs. Rinder are in best of health
I am sending you my warmest greetings
Cordially yours

Bronislaw Huberman

The Rev. Reuben R. Rinder
Arguello Bvd. & Lake Str.
SAN FRANCISCO, Cal.

Rinder: He was a renowned violinist, known throughout the world. He played here and it was one of the most thrilling concerts I've ever attended. He was a musician's musician. Everybody was there that night. It was a solo concert at the Opera House. It was really a very thrilling experience. I think it was the one and only time he ever concertized here.

Chall: But then after that you saw him from time to time, you corresponded.

Rinder: Oh yes.

Chall: You spent some time vacationing together in Carmel according to one of his letters. Was he a young man when you first met him?

Rinder: No, no, in his middle years possibly.

Chall: What kind of a person was he? This is unusual, it seems to me, for a musician to be so busy working on behalf of other people in an organized way.

Rinder: He was a European, you see. His roots were in Europe. I forget where he originated. He played as much in Europe as he played in America, perhaps more so. Therefore, he was interested in these musicians, even more than an American would be, or he knew their situation better than an American would have. He had seen what was happening to them. They were thrown out of their jobs and they had nothing to look forward to. They were being sent on to Israel and they needed money.

Rinder Music Fund

Chall: I wanted to ask you about the Rinder Music Fund. How did that get established? What's its purpose?

Rinder: There was some money left over from contributions to the last musical event that was given at the Temple, the Ben-Haim. It was suggested that they start a Rinder Music Fund with that. Subsequently it was noted in the Temple Bulletin and after that people would contribute to it when they wanted to honor him for one reason or another, for birthdays and for various occasions. When he became ill, many contributions were made. It was for the purpose of commissioning musicians to write music for the synagogue.

As a matter of fact, recently a commission has been given to a young

Rinder: composer who is teaching at Brandeis University. He is writing a composition for the 120th anniversary of the congregation. It will be given next year, so that's very interesting.

Chall: It enables the commission to continue.

Rinder: Yes, instead of having to go out and collect money in the community, it keeps coming in continually.

IV THE CANTOR AND THE RABBIS

Rabbi Martin A. Meyer, 1910-1923

Chall: Today I thought we'd start to talk about the rabbis. Now, Rabbi Meyer, according to my notes, was here at Emanu-El from 1910 to 1923. That was a span of thirteen years.

Rinder: He was instrumental in bringing my husband out here. He had gone East to look for a cantor and Stephen Wise, Rabbi Wise, suggested that he interview my husband, which he did. So Rob went on with Rabbi Meyer to San Francisco, where he appeared at Saturday morning services. And the following day he was elected to the position.

Chall: Well, since Rabbi Meyer was here thirteen years, some ten of which you would have known him well, I thought maybe you could tell me what he was like as a person and a rabbi.

Rinder: Well, he was a very fine person of great integrity, a very handsome man. You will find a picture of him there, blonde and tall and Nordic-looking, as a matter of fact. [Laughter] He didn't look like a rabbi. He looked more like a Protestant minister. He spoke very well, he preached well. He had quite a following. You see, he was born here in San Francisco. And he knew the community quite well. He made a great name for himself out here. He was particularly interested in the youth of the community.

After we came here, I found that every Saturday afternoon he had open house for these young men. They would come and sit at his feet, as it were, while he talked to them. He had such an influence upon them that most of them, as they grew up, became leaders in the community.

Chall: Who were some of them?

Rinder: Let's see. I wish you hadn't asked me that question. I don't remember. I know there was John Altman who later became an attorney. His widow, Bess, is still alive.

I recall others now. There was Lloyd Dinkelspiel, Louis Goodman, who became a judge; Milton Marks, a lawyer; Leo Rabinowitz, a lawyer;

Rinder: Albert Wollenberg, who is now a judge; Lawrence Livingston, Jefferson Peyser, and Louis I. Newman.

Rabbi Meyer influenced Louis Newman to study for the rabbinate. He went East later, Louis Newman did; after he graduated from the University of California, he went to Brown University. I don't know why I speak of him here, but he did follow Rabbi Meyer, you see, after Rabbi Meyer died. Louis Newman went East and studied under Stephen Wise. He did not attend Hebrew Union College as most rabbis did. He studied under Rabbi Stephen Wise, whom he admired greatly and who was, later, to start a seminary of his own in New York.

Our relationship with Rabbi Meyer was friendly but never intimate. There was a problem--I don't know whether I should even mention it, but he had a bad temper, which the public didn't know anything about, just his wife and my poor husband, those closest to him, you know, those who worked with him. And it was very difficult. There was a time when my husband threatened to leave. He just couldn't stand it any longer. But everything was smoothed over and fortunately his wife always took my husband's side, knowing that her husband had this temper and probably was in the wrong when arguments arose.

Chall: What kinds of things would set him off, set off an argument between him and your husband?

Rinder: It was things relating to the service and who was to do what. And my husband stood up for his rights always. He was a gentle, sweet, kindly person, but he had steel in his make-up. So that if a thing was right, he stood up for it and fought for it. It was the right thing to do, of course. At any rate, we managed to remain on friendly terms until Rabbi Meyer's death.

Chall: Can you remember anything else about his influence on the congregation or the people, aside from the feeling that the youth had?

Rinder: Yes. Interestingly enough, he was interested in Zionism. Way back there, certainly none of his members were. I think he and my husband and I were the only ones at Temple Emanu-El who were Zionists. He wrote a pamphlet on "Zionism and Reform Judaism," showing that they were compatible. I don't know what influence--he certainly didn't change any members' views on Zionism. They continued on their way blithely through the years until the State of Israel came into existence. Then there was a schism in the community and within our congregation too because then people did take sides. And there was very strong feeling; but that's another story.

Chall: Yes, we'll go into that, definitely. Of course, there would have been rather a wide age differential between you and your husband

Chall: and Rabbi Meyer and his wife.

Rinder: Yes, this is true. There was, of course.

Chall: That might have accounted for some of the problems in making decisions about the services and your lack of intimacy, perhaps.

Rinder: Probably.

Chall: Was there an assistant rabbi during those days?

Rinder: No, there was not. It was a much smaller congregation.

Chall: Do you remember Henry Wangenheim?

Rinder: Yes, of course I do. Mr. Wangenheim was president of the congregation when we first came here. He was a fine gentleman, of the old school, always impeccably dressed, a steel grey mustache neatly trimmed. To us, he was invariably kind, friendly and understanding. He must have been quite wealthy for he and his wife lived in a handsome apartment at the St. Francis Hotel.

Rabbi Louis Newman, 1924-1930

Chall: Let's talk about Rabbi Newman. He was on the pulpit from 1924 to 1930, but you had known him when you first came to San Francisco in 1914.

Rinder: Yes, he was a young man here and we met him off and on. Then he went East to study and later he came out here with his young bride, Lucille, and became the rabbi of the congregation.

We too were still quite young then and we were together a great deal. Somehow people felt when he was invited to dinner that we should come along too. So we were going everywhere together. [Laughter] And he and my husband became very good friends. They saw a great deal of each other and they worked together beautifully.

He was a magnificent preacher. He was a little distant. I think he was shy. It was difficult for him to unbend and become very intimate with any of the members of the congregation. That was his chief fault, if you can call it a fault. It was just a manifestation of his character, a personality trait really. But otherwise, a wonderful human being, very honest, very forthright, a man

Rinder: of great integrity. The members saw these traits in him and liked him very much. He was a great Zionist, to the extent that he overdid it sometimes on the pulpit.

Chall: Even on the pulpit?

Rinder: Yes, because he felt that the members didn't go along with him quite as far as he felt they should. However, I don't think he was ever censored for that. He continued on his merry way.

But his heart was never in San Francisco. It was then a very quiet little town, comparatively. And he remembered New York, where he had studied, as the place where all the Jews he ever wanted to know were located. He would say, "Oh if I were in New York, I'd have Stephen Wise to the right of me and John Haynes Holmes (a Christian minister whom he greatly admired) to the left of me, and all the Jews in the front and back of me." And that's what he wanted.

Interestingly enough, he wasn't raised as a very pious Jew at all. His father was an agnostic and he hadn't had a particularly Jewish background. But it was only later on that he became so very much involved in Jewish things. He became a devout Jew. So when the call came to him from a temple [Rodeph Sholom] in New York, he went.

Chall: And he's been there ever since 1930.

Rinder: Yes, he accepted and was really delighted to go. An indication of how his heart was not here was that when he first came here, he bought a Steinway grand piano; he was very musical: he sang very well and his sister was a very fine pianist and so they had lots of music in their home. My husband went with Rabbi Newman to select the piano, and as he made the deal, he asked, "How much does it cost to ship a piano to New York?" So even then he was thinking of going to New York some day.

Chall: His wife is from New York, is that right?

Rinder: Yes, yes.

Chall: She may have liked it better there too, do you suppose?

Rinder: I don't think so. She got along very nicely here. She's a charming, delightful person, a wonderful person. Everybody loved her. She was so busy having babies; she had all her three boys here in the seven years, so she was too busy with children to be active in the community. But socially, she was accepted and very well liked.

I'm sure he had considerable influence on the community even though

Rinder: he was in San Francisco such a short time. Many members still remember him because he was a great preacher.

Philosophy and Ritual

Chall: I noticed, in my research, that in 1929 Rabbi Newman had called for a return of poetry and ceremonial Hebrew in the Jewish home and a return to going to Temple services. And he also said that Palestine was to be an essential element in our philosophy of life and our religious viewpoint. So he seemed to have a desire to infuse what would be considered the old ritual into the Temple here, which you always said was quite reformed yet quite conservative.

Rinder: Yes. He must have had considerable influence, but not on Zionism. He couldn't influence them really but he spoke very freely on Zionism, for instance. Some accepted his stand and perhaps a few did take exception because there were people who were very much opposed to Israel, Palestine in those days; they said they were Americans first and Jews second.

Chall: It was quite remote in 1929, though, the whole idea of what the State would be. It was an emotional Zionism. Maybe he didn't influence them in terms of ceremony and what not, but he at least must have exposed them more to it.

Rinder: Yes, he did. He inaugurated the robes when he came. The men on the pulpit used to wear morning coats, and it was only after Rabbi Newman came that he inaugurated the wearing of the robe. That was really a great and interesting innovation because it was so new. Cutaways were used for other occasions, services for funerals or weddings, but frock coats were worn originally by the rabbi and the cantor.

Chall: I saw a picture of Cantor Rinder and he was wearing a tallis. When did the wearing of the tallis come in?

Rinder: That came in later. I think that Rabbi Fine brought back the tallis. In fact, we rarely had a bar mitzvah, once a year perhaps. Now we have one every week. For years, we had one Friday evening and Saturday morning, there were so many.

Chall: That's been some of the return to the tradition. It just happened after the war that certain of these traditions came back.

Rinder: Even at the Friday evening service, we have the Kiddush from the

Rinder: pulpit and some member of the congregation kindles the lights when we have the early service in the chapel. That is a fairly new innovation, as is the wearing of the tallis.

Chall: Didn't your husband wear a tallis probably up until the time he came here?

Rinder: He was at B'nai Jeshurun, which was a Conservative synagogue, and he certainly wore a tallis there. High hat, frock coat--oh, very elegant.

Chall: A frock coat and a tallis?

Rinder: Yes, not a robe; a robe is not a Jewish symbol at all. It was adopted from the Protestant ministers. He gave up the tallis when he came here. After all, if you accept a reformed pulpit, you have to do as they do. So that he went along; that was all right. You can be a good Jew without a tallis.

Chall: That's true, as many have been arguing for years. [Laughter] Where I grew up [Tacoma, Washington], the difference between wearing a hat and not wearing a hat is primarily what split the community in two until economics forced them together about ten years ago.

Rinder: Temple Emanu-El too, split; that's why there's Sherith Israel and Temple Emanu-El. No, there was another congregation that was on Bush Street. The hat wearers went to Bush Street and the others remained in Temple Emanu-El.

Chall: I understand, too, that Rabbi Newman was very concerned with Jewish education and that he sponsored a correspondence school in the outlying areas, so that children, in what we would now consider suburbs, who happened to be living in Petaluma or on the Peninsula, were able to get some training through his religious correspondence school.

Rinder: There were many phases of his activities of which I knew nothing. He was probably on many boards, of which I knew nothing. I always knew his activities in the Temple. Those were numerous. He was a busy man here. And he has remained so, in New York.

Chall: He's a splendid figure of a man.

Rinder: Yes, handsome--he was handsome when he was young, tall and slender. Even now though, he's a little heavier, his hair is silvery white. Have you seen him?

Chall: Yes, I met him. I was quite impressed with his bearing and his

Chall: beautiful speaking voice.

Rinder: Oh, beautiful! He spoke here recently and everybody was charmed with him.

Building the Temple

Rinder: Really, in discussing him I want to do it with the greatest affection and admiration because he really is a very remarkable man, a man of great integrity, as I think I've told you, and devotion to Judaism. I've never known anybody any more so than he is, and was, during the years he was here. He was very active. He participated in everything that took place in the community, particularly, of course, in Temple affairs. He was here at the time of the building of the new Temple.

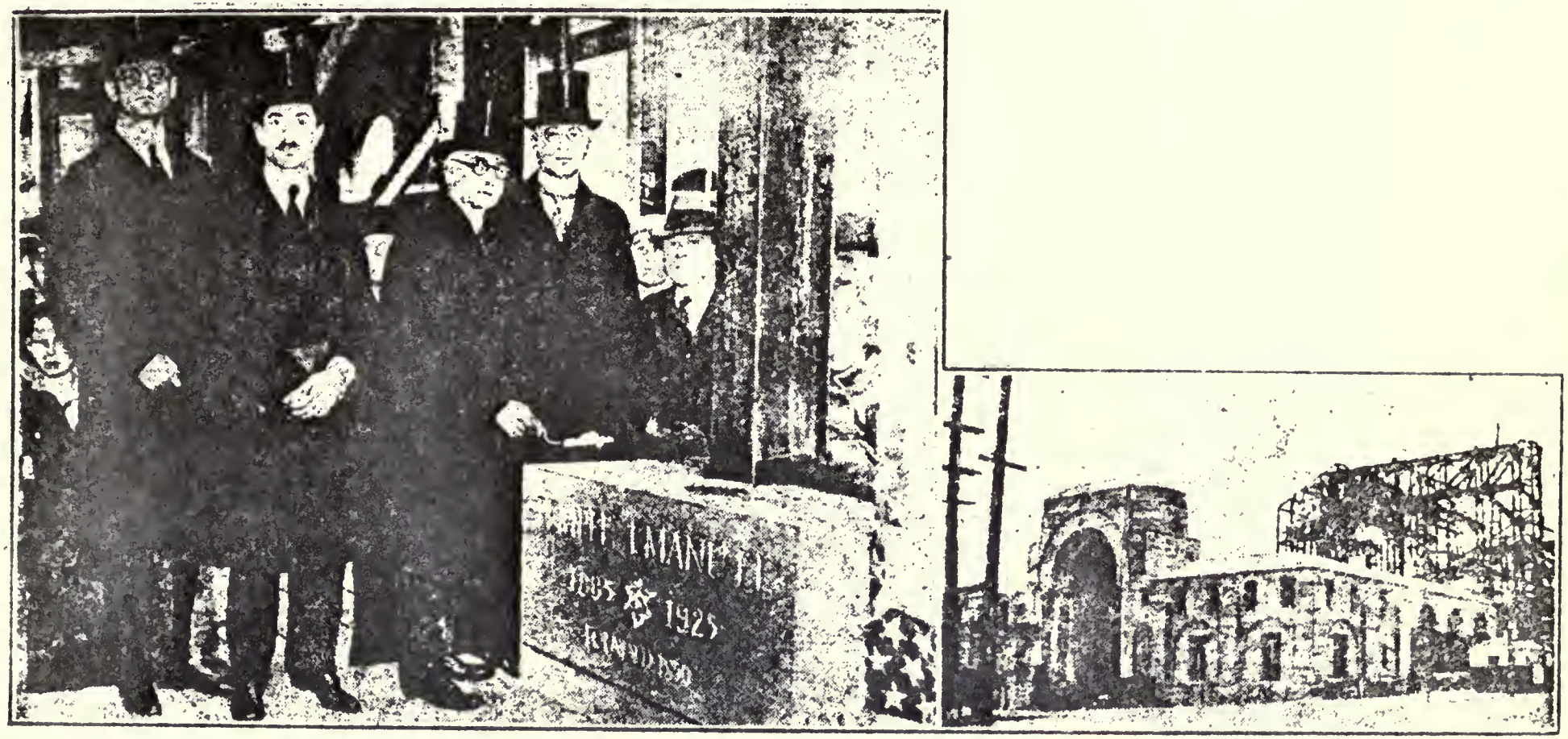
When we decided to build a new Temple--feeling that our location then was too far downtown--the city was growing and also we needed a larger place, we wanted a larger Sunday School for the children. A meeting was called of the congregants one evening and Rabbi Newman spoke and told them the needs. In about an hour we had gotten pledges of about one million dollars. We subsequently sold the lot on which the Temple stood, to the company which built 450 Sutter, for $500,000. So we had that amount of money to start. And since building was very much less than today, we were able to go ahead.

We considered numerous sites in the city. Finally we decided on the one where the present Temple is located. There was then only a very small building being used as a kindergarten with a large garden around it, so that I don't think any buildings but that had to be demolished.

Since many of our congregants were living out that way, moving out into the Richmond District and the Sunset District, and living up here too, in the Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights neighborhoods, it was convenient for them to come to this spot. It was near transportation too. So the committee decided that this was the spot, at the corner of Arguello and Lake Streets. And they began to build.

In the process of building, Rabbi Newman insisted that we have, for instance, a sloping floor in the Temple--which is unusual, but which has served wonderfully, because you can see from every part of the large auditorium. Then he proceeded to virtually fight to have the school built.

Daily Illustrated Herald, Monday - February 23, 1925.



LAY CORNER STONE OF TEMPLE EMANU-EL—Nearly 1500 persons braved the threatening rain yesterday to take part in the exercises at the new synagogue at Lake street and Arguello boulevard. Right is shown the edifice as it appears today. Left are those who took part in the program. Left to right: Rabbi Louis I. Newman, Cantor Reuben Rinder, Henry L. Mayer, president of the congregation; Louis Bloch, chairman of the building committee, and Sylvain Schnaittacher, architect. Copies of the Illustrated Daily Herald were placed in the corner stone. The receptacle also held photographs of the four preceding synagogues which bore the name of Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco. Ground for the new structure was broken last October. It is hoped to complete the edifice before the end of this year.

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Rinder: At the same time that we were building, the community felt a great need for a Jewish Center for young people to meet, to have their social life, and for various reasons. It was felt that two buildings such as this at the same time, in a comparatively small city, might not be advisable. We might not be able to get funds for both. And there was a great struggle that went on between the committee of the Temple and the committee of the Jewish Center, most of whose members were members of our congregation, at the same time. I think Harold Zellerbach was head of the Jewish Center committee. Finally, Rabbi Newman won out and our Temple House was built.

Chall: Temple House includes what?

Rinder: It's a five-story building adjoining the Temple. The Temple is built L-shaped--the Temple goes in one direction and the Temple House goes down Lake Street. It is five stories in height. There was a gymnasium downstairs. The next floor contained a library for Jewish books and some offices. Then the rest were school rooms. And on the main floor there was a little theatre. And that was something that Rabbi Newman really had to fight for because there too, he wanted a sloping floor. He insisted upon a perfectly equipped stage with headlights and footlights and backdrops and a beautiful curtain, and dressing rooms in the rear, and dressing rooms upstairs, so the males and the females would be separated.

It was really a perfect setting for the drama group which Rabbi Newman subsequently organized and which functioned for quite a number of years. They put on a great many plays, the chief amongst them being The Dybbuk, with Zemach directing.

The Dybbuk

Rinder: Nahum Zemach had just come over from Russia and Rabbi Newman had seen a notice of his arrival in New York in the New York Times, and he decided that none other than Zemach must come out here and direct The Dybbuk. And he proceeded to communicate with him and Zemach came!

We had the great pleasure of meeting him, of course, because my husband was in charge of the music. There is considerable music in this play, as you perhaps know, some very beautiful music. There's the "Beggar's Dance," which is very well known, and a great many others. It happened that some of the music was not obtainable here, so Zemach would hum the music. He knew the words--we had the words of course in the books--he would hum the music and my husband would notate it

Rinder: as he went. We were living down in Palo Alto at the time. He spent weeks with us going over this music until it was ready for rehearsals. Then there ensued weeks and weeks of rehearsal.

Those participating are rather well known today: Carolyn Anspacher was Leah, the lead female character; Irving Pichel, who was teaching in Berkeley at the time, participated; Charles Levison, one of the sons of J. B. Levison, now known as Charles Lane, went down to Hollywood, as Pichel did, subsequently; oh, a great many others too numerous to mention.

Chall: Yes, the programs are available in the Magnes Museum. That was a major event in the community.

Rinder: It ran for two weeks. We charged admission.

Chall: That's all?!

Rinder: Well, that's long for an amateur performance, although it was done so well it was almost professional. We were really very proud of it, as Rabbi Newman was too.

Chall: I wanted to ask you about this play because its setting is the ghetto in East Europe, with a Jewish tradition which must have been rather unknown and alien to the Emanu-El congregants, if not to the players themselves. How did they respond to it?

Rinder: Wonderfully. There were weeks of preparation, as a matter of fact. Rabbi Newman began preparing them during his weekly sermons. He would speak of it occasionally and tell them the story of it, and what dybbuk meant: the spirit of a dead person presumably entering into the body of a living person, even speaking through him. After all, they weren't too far removed from these Jewish tales. I know that the auditorium was crowded every evening. There was a matinee on weekends. I went a number of times, as everybody who was connected with the Temple did. It was a fascinating thing to see. It was beautifully done.

Chall: It was a great inauguration for the new Temple Theatre.

Rinder: Yes, it was marvelous.

Chall: I have a Temple Emanu-El Chronicle, dated September 23, 1927. And it says, "The Temple Players, it's indicated, will present as their first production of the year" (that's 1927) "'The Circle,' by Somerset Maugham." Four other plays were to follow. Then it indicates that the year before they did "You and I" and "The Dover Road." So the little theatre was really a going thing.

Rinder: Paul Bissinger directed these plays for the most part. Those participating were Janet Coe and Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr. They fell in love at that time and subsequently married as a result of this association.

Chall: So Rabbi Newman was responsible for getting that little theatre built and getting the Temple Players started. And he apparently was able to give the congregation the feeling of need for a new Temple and raise the money that was needed.

Rinder: Oh yes, to a degree that we never had to have a mortgage.

Rabbi Newman Leaves Emanu-El

Chall: So I read, which is most unusual.

Rinder: Yes. So throughout the years we've been able to avoid that dilemma. It's been really quite a feather in our caps that we've been able to do that.

Then, for some reason, Rabbi Newman began having an urge to go East where more of the Jewish activities of the age were taking place. He felt that this community was too static, Jewishly. And he wanted greater activity and he began looking around for another position. Finally, he was offered the pulpit of Rodeph Sholom, which he accepted.

The Temple Board and the members of the congregation were greatly distressed to learn that. I remember the president [Samuel Dinkelspiel] spending several hours with him trying to urge him to change his mind, when he returned from the East after having accepted this pulpit. But he said no, he had made up his mind, and that he felt that his place was in New York where Jews were actively interested in Zionism, for instance, and in various things pertaining to Judaism and Jewish life.

In the meantime, he had been writing consistently. And he had written a book on Chassidism. I'm not sure whether he finished it while he was here or not. But he wrote "Chassidism," "The Jewish Influence on Christianity," and numerous pamphlets. He wrote the words for many oratorios, which were performed in his congregation and elsewhere. I know that he became exceedingly active in New York, too.

We have remained friends through the years. We have done so up to

Rinder: the present time. And when we go East, we see him and his wife. we are always able to renew our friendship where we left off. We have followed his career with great interest as he has ours. He has been with us on important occasions in our lives. When the Temple celebrated my husband's forty-fifth anniversary, he was brought out to give the main talk. In New York, when we celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary, he was the only outsider, he and his wife, to be present, outside our own family. At that time, he wrote this poem to us, which you have read.

Recently when he was here [February, 1969], his wife, Lucille, had the misfortune of falling in her hotel room and breaking her arm. She was taken to the hospital. To show what an impression he had made during his first seven years of his stay here thirty-seven years ago, she was showered with attention. Her room was filled with flowers and fruit and candy and books, which she didn't have time to read because she had so many callers. Every rabbi in the community called on her, so much so that she was moved to tears as she talked of the attentions that had been shown to her while here. She said if there was any place to break one's arm, San Francisco was the place.

Chall: You also indicated that people, at least the old-timers, always call on him when they go to New York. I'm sure it left a gap, at least in your life, and also in the lives of others, when he left.

Rinder: Oh definitely, yes. He is much beloved in his present congregation. I go there when I'm in New York to attend services. And he never fails to announce from the pulpit that I am present. It embarrasses me but I expect it now. I remember when my husband and I returned from one of our trips to Europe and Israel and we attended services, he called us up on the pulpit to present us to the congregation and wish us welcome back home safely. That was very touching.

Rabbi Melbourne Harris

Chall: Was there an assistant rabbi during Rabbi Newman's time here?

Rinder: Yes, Mel Harris our first assistant rabbi came to us direct from Hebrew Union College. He was an Oakland boy whom many of us had known before he became our rabbi. He brought with him his newly married wife Leora, a charming young woman, eager to help and eager to please. Mel's duties were as director of Jewish education in our Sunday School. He also taught the confirmation class and preached only occasionally in the absence of Rabbi Newman or on other special occasions--also during the High Holidays for the overflow congregation in the Martin Meyer auditorium. He was much admired and liked throughout his stay of two years--one under Rabbi Newman and one under Rabbi Reichert.

Chall: Did he leave at the time Rabbi Newman left?

Rinder: I don't remember. I know he left to go east, somewhere in the Middlewest, where his wife came from, because her father was ill. She was an only child and they went back there. Then he went as assistant to Rabbi Silver, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, of Cleveland for a while. Later, he left the rabbinate to enter his father-in-law's business.

I see him very frequently when he comes out here to visit. He comes from Oakland and he still has family, and his young son lives here in Marin County. They were both here last summer and he's still in business. The business has grown and they have many businesses. And he gave up the rabbinate entirely.

Temple Leadership

Chall: In the material I have seen--some of it's sketchy, of course--I noticed in the Second Annual Report of the Men's Club in 1924, that Leon Voorsanger was president and Lloyd Dinkelspiel was the vice-president of the Men's Club. Can you tell me about some of the leaders of the congregation at that time?

Rinder: Well, Leon Voorsanger was the son of Rabbi Voorsanger.

Chall: One of the early rabbis of the congregation?

Rinder: Yes. Lloyd Dinkelspiel was an important person in the community. He was president of the congregation too [1938-1943], a very fine person, wonderful. And a member of one of the old families.

Chall: Was it the old families, as you recall, who were the leaders and remained in leadership over the years?

Rinder: To a large extent, it's remained to this day that the children and the grandchildren have carried on. Not entirely, but in every period there have been children, grandchildren, even the great-grandchildren of some of these people that we knew, who up to today are still active in Jewish communal life--the Koshland children, the Slosses, Judge and Mrs. Sloss' children, the Haases, they in particular.

Chall: This has lent, I assume, a stability and maybe a conservative type of trend to the congregation.

Rinder: Stability, yes, and continuity, yes; perhaps conservatism. As a matter of fact, it is a little more conservative than most other Jewish groups because we're not as aggressive in our campaigning as some communities are. Consequently, according to our Jewish population, we don't collect as much money for Jewish causes as some of the other Jewish communities do. But then, we are third and fourth and, some of them, fifth generation Jews out here who have no memories of persecution or problems of any kind--anti-Semitic unpleasantness in any form--that would induce them to give more than they want to give.

For instance, I know that in other Jewish communities, even down in Los Angeles, where there are more Orthodox and Conservative Jews, more East European Jews than we have up here, they give per capita much more than our people do. Of course, our very wealthy give most generously; we're very proud of them. But not the middle class. The lowest give too; they give beyond their means sometimes because their hearts are in it, but the middle groups are not the big givers. We always have problems with them.

My daughter attended a dinner last night, of the Peninsula people who have been giving $100 or $150. They decided to have a dinner here at Trader Vic's with dress-up--black tie and the works--but they had to give $1,000 or more. And eighty people attended, most of whom had never given more than $100. They came because of this gimmick and gave $1,000 or more. Isn't that interesting?

Chall: [Laughter] I should say.

Rinder: They tried it and it worked. So you see how many can do but don't.

Chall: What about Samuel Dinkelspiel, Louis Bloch and Henry L. Mayer, who were presidents of the congregation while Rabbi Newman was here?

Rinder: Mr. Dinkelspiel and Mr. Mayer were retired businessmen at that time, both very fine gentlemen, American-born, wealthy. Mr. Bloch was younger than they and president of Crown Zellerbach, very active in communal affairs. He was the president of the congregation at the time of the building of the new Temple on Arguello and Lake.

Rabbi Irving F. Reichert, 1930-1947

Chall: We might talk about Rabbi Reichert now. I feel, but I don't know if it's true, his tenure brought about some major changes in Temple

Chall: Emanu-El's life. Controversies, I think, came to the fore. Rabbi Reichert was here for seventeen years. That's a long time. Can you tell me something about Rabbi Reichert as an individual, and as a rabbi?

Rinder: He was a very fine preacher, with a fine mind, very charming--socially, a charming gentleman. His wife was very pretty, a charming young woman. They were quite young when they came here. They had three young children when they arrived, two girls and a boy. They were soon very well liked by the members of the congregation. Rabbi Reichert really made quite a name for himself in the community. I don't know, at the moment, what his particular interests were, communally.

We weren't on very intimate terms, for some reason. We were friendly, but not very intimate, so that I don't know what his activities were really. I was busy raising my young family and they were busy raising theirs. We saw each other on major Temple occasions and at services.

Mrs. Reichert had a very wise theory that if you don't make a simcha for yourself, nobody else will. So when there was a birthday in the family, or an anniversary, or some reason for having a party, she would have one and very graciously she included us. We were at their home quite frequently and we had them here occasionally. They entertained much more than we did.

They had a very handsome home--several houses. They moved two or three times. The last home was a beautiful home on the corner of Jackson and Presidio; it's opposite that small park. They had gone to England and had brought back some fine old English antiques and they furnished the house very handsomely.

They became very good friends with some of the most influential people in the congregation. Rabbi Reichert began to play golf and became very much interested in outdoor life and fishing. He went fishing up on the Mackenzie River where all of our wealthy congregants went.

Cantor Rinder Assumes Pastoral Duties

Chall: A country club kind of life?

Rinder: Country club. Unfortunately, that took him out of the city a little more often than was wise because there were so many occasions when

Rinder: he was needed. There were, unhappily, deaths in the community and other occasions when he would have been called upon and he wasn't available. And they began calling upon my husband.

That was really the beginning of my husband's pastoral activities in his career. Through these various services, he became better acquainted with the membership. And the next time anything occurred in the family, they would call upon him automatically, without going to the rabbi first. And this went on gradually until such a time as Rabbi Reichert realized my husband was a threat to him in that respect.

So he called upon an attorney, a member of the congregation, to look up the law, to see whether my husband, being just a cantor and not an ordained rabbi, could be stopped legally from performing wedding ceremonies. Since the law can be twisted to suit almost any need and occasion, it was twisted so that he couldn't. A law was passed at the board, upon the suggestion of this attorney, a friend of the rabbi, that my husband could not perform wedding ceremonies. This ruling was in effect for a number of years.

Chall: Where he wouldn't allow him . . .?

Rinder: Where he wasn't permitted to officiate. I don't know whether I should even mention this. The members of the board at the time, most of them, accepted this situation until four or five years later. By then, they found that there was so much opposition among the membership--so many asked for Rob and wanted him and refused to go to the rabbi, and would rather go to some other rabbi in the community--that they thought they'd better look into it further.

So another attorney was approached, who found that even a layman who officiates at services in a house of worship almost automatically is legally permitted to perform wedding services, just as a captain on a ship is. Though not ordained, a captain on a ship may perform a wedding ceremony. And they found that it was legal in California, particularly. I don't know about the rest of the country. And so, from then on, the order was reversed and he was able to perform. Besides, many whom he had married previous to this were a little concerned, that perhaps they had been living in sin. [Laughter]

Rabbi Reichert Leaves Emanu-El

Chall: During this time, however, he could officiate at funerals?

Rinder: Oh yes, that went on steadily. It got to the point that the rabbi was not really attending to his duties as he was expected to. The Sunday School attendance went down. It was really a threat to the congregation because it showed that we weren't getting new members because there were no young children attending our school. It had gone down by hundreds.

They decided that the time had come to act. And so the members of the board called a meeting. There was much controversy, because the rabbi was very well liked among the older families, where he had rather made it a point to become very friendly; they fought for him, but they lost out. And he was asked to resign. He had a number of years further on his contract. Of course, that money was paid him, in addition to severance pay, as is usually done in such instances. And after seventeen years he was forced to leave.

It was rather a tragic situation for a man of his age; I think he was only fifty-two at the time. He was almost too old to look for another position. Although he could have found something, the whole country knew why he had been told to go. So I don't think he ever sought another position. Yes, he did--he got a position out at Westlake for a while with Temple Judea, and he was there for a few years. That was the only position he held after this one.

Chall: He must have brought this on himself. Why do you think that he would have allowed himself to stop functioning as a rabbi, or as we consider a rabbi--somebody who's ready to officiate at weddings and funerals and bar mitzvahs and all the rest--why would he have taken himself off fishing or golfing or whatever?

Rinder: I don't know except that the fact that he was taken up by these families went to his head. And he thought, why should he work hard when he didn't have to? He was just going to have fun and take it easy.

I remember that my son was to graduate from U.C. in midyear--I think it was February. It was to be on a Saturday, and Dean Deutsch [Monroe], who was Dean of Men in those days and who was a member of our congregation, telephoned my husband to apologize for the fact that it was being held on a Saturday, but it was the only and most convenient day for the University and they just had to have it. My husband said he understood.

I had told my husband to be sure and tell Rabbi Reichert that he would not be present at services that morning. He said, "I'll tell him Friday night." When he got to the Temple on Friday night, he found the rabbi had gone fishing! He hadn't said a thing to anybody, just went off. Perhaps the office knew, but he hadn't said anything to my husband who should have been told.

Rinder: So Rob couldn't attend his own son's graduation, particularly after we had begged our son to attend. He wasn't going to, didn't want to bother. You know, many of them don't. But he had rented a cap and gown and promised to attend his own graduation. Well, I went, of course, but my husband couldn't see his only son graduate.

Chall: There was no assistant rabbi at the time who could have substituted for Rabbi Reichert?

Rinder: I think not.

Chall: Well, that's an interesting development in a man.

Rinder: Yes. Why a man does a thing like that is just beyond understanding. Except that, as I say, it just went to his head--the fact that they were all so devoted to him, as they were, and remained his friends after his separation from the congregation. In fact, after his wife died a few years later, he married Jean Ehrman of the Ehrman family, one of the important families in the community.

Chall: How was the relationship between him and Cantor Rinder through the years?

Rinder: Well, outwardly friendly--they spoke. But more and more he resented, of course, Rob's position, which began being more important than his. I mean, Rob was being called upon for every occasion in the life of the families of the congregation.

Chall: I understand he had a very complex personality. Sometimes, I have been told, he wouldn't communicate for long periods of time with the people who were working closely with him, like, for example, your husband. There might be times when he wouldn't even speak to him. Is that so?

Rinder: Where did you get that? I didn't tell you that.

Chall: You didn't tell me that, no. This indicates a rather difficult working relationship.

Rinder: Well, it wasn't too intimate a relationship, nor very close. But it seemed friendly on the surface and they managed to get along fairly well. My husband knew what he wanted and he fought for his rights. He stood up for his rights. [Laughter] And sometimes it was very difficult, but he persevered, being that type of person. And in the end he came out ahead, or where he wanted to be.

I found a couple of letters which Rabbi Reichert had written to us while we were away on a vacation. They show that he had friendly feelings toward us at one time, and quite frankly, I'd forgotten about that.

The Zionist Issue

Chall: And then there was the Zionist issue, which must have created a certain amount of ill-feeling.

Rinder: Oh yes, he was really rabidly anti-Zionist. One evening on Kol Nidre night, he attacked the Zionists. When he got through, he said, "And that goes for Hadassah, too."

Chall: Oh, is that right? That's not in his speech; it's not part of the written text.

Rinder: And the next morning (not literally, of course), we had one hundred resignations from Hadassah, of members who were there and who had heard what he said. There were also resignations from the congregation by Zionists and Hadassah members. It was during the war and there were servicemen present at the services. And they went out indignant. Everyone was milling about in the foyer discussing this thing that had gone on--an anti-Zionist sermon on Kol Nidre Eve!

Chall: I think it would be interesting to find out how the congregation reacted that night [October 8, 1943] to his Kol Nidre speech, "Where Do You Stand." He made it very very clear where he stood and where he hoped everybody else would stand.

Rinder: That's right. He spoke of divided loyalties and other things. I met him at a bar mitzvah a few days later. In those days, they didn't celebrate in the Temple House as they do today. They celebrated at home and we would usually call on the families. We paid our call and as we were leaving, he and Mrs. Reichert came in. So we discussed it very freely, his talk of a few nights back; and I said, pointing at him, "Even Hitler didn't say what you said last night." [Laughter] But we continued our friendship. That was all right; he had a right to his views as we had to ours.

Chall: But what happened in the congregation? Many of the members of the congregation became members, some were on the board of the American Council for Judaism. Who were some you remember?

Rinder: They weren't all too vocal. We all knew who they were. Mrs. M. C. Sloss and her family; George Levison is still very much opposed, and Joseph Mendelson, for some reason. Of course, there were many others. There was a very good friend of mine, Amanda Schlesinger, a very intelligent woman. They were all intelligent--these men are attorneys--but they were third or fourth generation born in America, and Europe was very far from them, and they were more American first and Jews second, which is perhaps natural. The problem didn't touch them too vitally; they didn't react as did the Jews

Rinder: who came from Europe.

Chall: Monroe Deutsch was the honorary president. What happened to some of your feelings of loyalty and old-time friendships with these people who weren't just sitting on the fence as others in those days may have been? But these people like Deutsch, Mrs. Sloss, Grover Magnin, Mr. Hone, and the Koshlands, were actively involved in the American Council for Judaism. How did you feel about this?

Rinder: The Koshlands, not too much. Dan Koshland is too nice to say no when he's asked to join, so he joined, but he was never really active. If you went to him for something in Israel, he gave immediately. We remained friends. Interestingly enough, when my husband began organizing the Israeli Symphony here, when Huberman was here, the first meeting was held in Mrs. Sloss' home. And the first monies were collected in her home. So you see, even though she was on the board of the American Council for Judaism, her heart was Jewish. She came to services every Saturday and she was a very wonderful human being, a marvelous person.

Chall: There was really no question about their being Jewish. I think they felt that they were primarily American Jews.

Rinder: Yes. I mean, to me, I would say I'm Jewish first; after all, I wasn't born here. It just shows, you know, people talk of their native land, where they were born, you know, you feel a sense of loyalty. Therefore, so many of them are opposed to having, let's say, a United States of the World or Europe, because they're afraid they'll have to give up some of their sovereignty.

It is absurd because it isn't an ingrained thing that you're born with, you know, this sense of belonging to a country. You can acquire it. I have a love for the United States of America, where I was not born. Now when I see a flag go sailing by during a parade, for instance, I get a lump in my throat just as though it were the flag of my country--as it is, since I'm a citizen.

Chall: What about Sherith Israel? Was there this kind of a conflict in the congregation Sherith Israel?

Rinder: There didn't seem to be, no. There was one conflict there when Rabbi Jacob Weinstein was there. They considered him too radical for them. And he had to go. But I don't know what happened there really. I don't think there was this schism between the Zionists and the anti-Zionists because Rabbi Goldstein was not so much involved with Zionism or anti-Zionism. He was just a middle-of-the-road man. He served both sides so that was all right.

Chall: Did some of the Emanu-El people, who were upset at Rabbi Reichert's

Chall: speech, leave and go to Sherith Israel at that time?

Rinder: Well, they left, but I don't think they went to Sherith Israel. Most of them joined Saul White's congregation [Beth Sholom].

Chall: Did they stay? Was that a permanent loss to the Emanu-El community?

Rinder: Some returned. There weren't so many, but there were more Hadassah members who resigned from Hadassah and the Zionist organization. So that was really a loss. Aside from ourselves, Henry and Adella Harris, and Judge and Mrs. Isadore Golden, there weren't many Zionists in our congregation at that time.

Rabbi Reichert's Other Activities

Chall: You had told me that you hadn't been aware of much of what Rabbi Reichert had done inside or outside of the Temple. I thought I would mention a few of the activities that I had learned about and see if perhaps you could maybe remember them, and then tell me what you associate with the memory. He raised sixty thousand dollars for the Temple acoustics. Do you recall that?

Rinder: Yes, true, the acoustics were very poor and we had to do something; they did a tremendous job in trying to correct that fault. It's difficult to say whether it was the fault of the architect or whether it was because the walls were of cement and concrete instead of wood. See, wood makes a wonderful sounding board but cement does not. And there were echoes all over the place. They had to build a scaffolding and line the walls halfway up, and also the ceiling, with a porous substance (foam rubber, I think) which deadened the sound so that there were no more echoes.

New loudspeakers were installed all over the place and it really helped a great deal. What it also did, however, was to mar the brilliancy of the singing voice. You know, there were no overtones afterwards. We got accustomed to it after a while, but at first my husband was beside himself because there was no resonance. I suppose it was more important that the speakers be heard than that the singing be resonant.

Chall: Many people don't notice such things. Mr. Altman said, that while it was very important that this acoustical change be made, "We lost the bloom."

Rinder: Yes, yes, he feels it too.

Chall: Also, Rabbi Reichert organized the Pacific Coast Conference on Jewish Religious Schools, he organized a program for German refugees, and organized a Conference of Christian-Jewish Fellowship. These were various kinds of things that he did. He seems to have been a person with a rounded intellectual approach. He preached sermons on the radio almost constantly; many of these were published. He was in demand as a labor mediator. In 1938, he had Christian sectarian materials eliminated from San Francisco public schools at Christmas-time. Roosevelt asked him to come back to Washington to be on a national committee to convene a parliament of religions in Washington. You were not aware of any of these outside activities?

Rinder: At the time, I probably was. Now I had forgotten until you mentioned these activities.

Chall: Was Mrs. Reichert active after her children grew up? Was she more active in the congregation? What was she doing?

Rinder: No, not particularly. At that time, I don't think the congregation was very active. We did have a Women's Guild, as we have now, but very few activities went on. There was no drama group, as we had had under Rabbi Newman, and perhaps there were a few things within the Sunday School, of which I don't know very much. I never participated in the activities there.

But there was nothing very much for her to be involved in, nor was she very active in any of the organizations that I recall. She was a very busy mother and I think she was very friendly with many of the wives of the congregants and she was active in that regard. I forgot to mention that she painted very well and spent her leisure, if any, painting.

Rabbi Morton Bauman

Chall: What about the assistant rabbi, Morton Bauman? What were his relationships with the people in Emanu-El, the cantor and the rabbi himself?

Rinder: Well, he was a very nice kind person. You see, assistant rabbis, as a rule, do not take so important a part within the congregational family or in the community that their activities are outstanding in any way. They're very young as a rule. They come direct from Hebrew Union College after their graduation. They are new and untried, and newly married, some of them, or not married, and are interested in other things. And their activities are pretty much

Rinder: confined to the few things that concern them within the congregation. So there's really not much to say about them. They go off later to their own congregation, which is the fair thing to do. There was an exception in the case of Rabbi Heller who stayed here eleven years, which was the longest period as an assistant rabbi. He remained, but we'll go on to him later.

Chall: I was wondering whether Rabbi Bauman picked up any of Rabbi Reichert's duties as time went on.

Rinder: Not too much. I think my husband did more than Rabbi Bauman because he was known in the community by then. I forgot to mention that there was a considerable lapse of time between Rabbi Newman's going and Rabbi Reichert's coming. And all that time my husband was functioning as the head rabbi, almost. And also, did I mention that during Rabbi Meyer's time, he was with the Red Cross during the war?

Chall: No, you didn't.

Rinder: Rabbi Meyer was away for six months or more. It was during that time that my husband became active in the congregation and he became known. That was really the beginning of his acquaintanceship, his very good acquaintanceship, with the congregants. And then after Rabbi Meyer passed away, there was a long period, almost a year, before Rabbi Newman came. Was it a year? There was usually a long period because they couldn't make up their minds trying to find the right man. They were in no great hurry because my husband was doing a fairly good job and they were well satisfied.

The Congregation Faces the Nation's Social Problems

Chall: There was some background then for him to have assumed what are known as pastoral duties from time to time.

We're talking about the period between 1930 and 1947. This was a difficult time in the United States for Jews. There was the Depression, and the influx of the German refugees, and the concern about Hitler, then the concern about Israel, and the war itself. So these were probably difficult years, would have been difficult anyway, regardless of who was in the pulpit. How did this affect the community, the Emanu-El community, as you recall?

Rinder: Well, financially, not too much, as you can imagine, they being the affluent group in the community. They did reduce the salaries of the personnel during the Depression, but not too much. So we weren't

Rinder: as badly off as so many others who had to face that dreadful situation during the Depression. And as soon as possible they resumed the former salaries.

When the war refugees began coming here, the Germans, as you stated, Rabbi Reichert and some of the women--like Mrs. Sloss and Mrs. Koshland--were instrumental in seeing that we had groups to meet socially in our Temple frequently, afternoon teas and evening parties for them, so that they would meet Americans. Classes were organized to teach them English, and they were helped in every way possible, so that they soon found themselves part of the community. Many of them made good, as you know.

Chall: Some of them were going to other synagogues and temples, too. I suppose it depended upon who had brought them into this country, and where they felt more comfortable.

Rinder: A great many came to us because they had to have visas and a certain amount of money, and our people could afford to do these things better than almost any other group in the city. So they were very active and a very large contingent came to our Temple shortly after. They arrived and some of them joined the congregation. Others formed a group known as the "Thirty-Three." They're still in existence. I don't know whether it's a social group now or what it is. I think they hold their own services during the High Holy Days, as a matter of fact. They came in 1933, I assume.

Of course, the whole world was concerned with this, and we were all personally concerned with the situation. You don't know where one thing began and another ended. We were involved in all directions, through the Temple, through the Jewish Center; the entire community was busy doing something. The Council of Jewish Women had classes teaching them English.

Also, the Council of Jewish Women served food at Council House, breakfasts and lunches to servicemen on their way through San Francisco to the South Pacific. That was after we entered the war. I remember I staffed it on certain days. These boys would come through and they would get their bagel and lox and coffee and they'd sit around. Some of them, realizing the situation, were morose and unhappy about going on, being shipped out. They weren't eager to go, any more than our boys are today, I assure you. But at least there was a good reason for going. There was no feeling that it wasn't worthwhile as it is today. They had something to fight for. But nevertheless, they realized what was ahead of them and the predicament they might find themselves in some day.

Chall: I suppose that many of the boys from Emanu-El were going off too, in various directions, and this was a problem to face.

Rinder: Oh, certainly. They were going in all directions.

Cantor Rinder Celebrates Twenty-five Years With Temple Emanu-El

Chall: Now during this period--I learned from all this material you gave me--in 1938, Cantor Rinder commemorated twenty-five years with the Temple. But I don't seem to find anything more about it. I don't think I found a program or anything that would specify something special.

Rinder: There was no program. Nothing public was done at the time. He was asked to attend a board meeting at one time. And he was told then how pleased they were with his work. It was then he was presented by the members of the board with a new set of flat silver which was lovely. And I was delighted with it.

Chall: I also have a note that Cantor Rinder, in 1943, reorganized the Men's Club, for which apparently many years later they still felt grateful.

Rinder: No, that I don't recall. If it was noted somewhere, probably that was just what happened. That's very interesting to me. [Laughter]

Chall: He was so busy, he was doing so many things, he couldn't come home and tell you everything, could he? [Laughter]

Rinder: He probably did and I've forgotten, that's all.

Chall: Now, have you anything that you could add to this seventeen-year period?

Rinder: I look back upon it as not an outstanding part of our life in the community; you know, there were no high points. There were instead low points, of course, because of the war and the Depression. There wasn't much you could do about it. So that it's not an outstanding time of our life. It was a very sad time for everybody in the world, not only for us.

Temple Leadership

Chall: Mr. Richard Sloss was president from 1943 to 1946 and this was a time when the schism had developed.

Rinder: Which schism? The one between the Zionists and anti-Zionists?

Chall: Yes, I would consider that the primary schism. Was there another one? [Laughter]

Rinder: No, no. I thought you meant the one between the pro- and anti-Reicherts.

Chall: Because of these divisions, Richard Sloss, or any president at that time, would have had to . . .

Rinder: Kind of try to smooth things over, yes. He was not too much in favor of Israel, as a Jewish state, nor was his mother who was the very active and very influential Mrs. M. C. Sloss. She was very influential in the community, and she was rabidly anti-Zionist, as her children were, of course. Nevertheless, we were very good friends. She was really devoted to us, generous in every way, friendly, but when it came to Zionism, there was this division. It was deepened of course by this speech and Rabbi Reichert's attitude.

As I look back, it surprises me that Rabbi Reichert came out against a Jewish state, against Zionism. There's no reason in the world why it should have happened. I can understand Mrs. Sloss, or some of the others, who were the third or fourth generation Americans, born here, but Rabbi Reichert's parents were not born here. Most of those who came to America from Europe were deeply involved with their past, with Judaism and, necessarily almost, with Israel, with Zionism. Whether it was because of his contact with the congregants here where he learned to think as they did, as they would like him to think, or whatever it was, I don't know.

Chall: Do you think anybody would have been able to be president during those latter years who didn't follow Rabbi Reichert's thinking? I'm just wondering, for example, why Richard Sloss would have been president at that time.

Rinder: Well, he was around; he evinced a great interest in the Temple. He attended services. You have to get somebody who is interested and to whom it's meaningful, and somebody who's more or less outstanding in the community, who's known, an intelligent person. Many things enter into selecting a president of a congregation. They've been very broad-minded that way. It just happened that most of them have not been outstanding Zionists. They're not the type who would join Temple Emanu-El in the first place.

Chall: I see, a selective process to begin with. Then by 1947, Harold Zellerbach was the president; Rabbi Reichert left and Rabbi Fine

Chall: shortly thereafter came in. The problems had surfaced. What role do you think Mr. Zellerbach played in this?

Rinder: In the ousting of Rabbi Reichert?

Chall: Yes. Was he chosen president because some anti-Reichert feelings of his might have been known? Would he have been chosen for this reason?

Rinder: Possibly that's true. They felt that he would be able to consummate a division, if you can call it that, a separation of church and state. [Laughter] He was the one who finally succeeded in making him resign.

Rabbi Alvin I. Fine, 1948-1964

Chall: He must have run on a platform then that was known to somebody.

Rinder: Perhaps. And then he was the one who went East to find another Rabbi and selected Rabbi Fine.

Chall: Oh, Mr. Zellerbach did that himself?

Rinder: Yes. At that time, Rabbi Fine was working with Nelson Gleuck who was head of the Hebrew Union College. Rabbi Fine was not looking for a position within a congregation, in fact, he resisted coming. Harold Zellerbach insisted that he should come, and finally he persuaded him and he came out. He was only thirty-two when he became our rabbi and he looked even younger. He still looks young.

Chall: Since he wasn't preparing for a congregation of any kind, this must have come as a wholly new experience both to him and the rest of you.

Rinder: A terrific experience, as you can imagine. He hardly had any preparation for this sort of thing. He had had a very small position during the High Holy Days in several little congregations down south. I don't think he'd ever held a permanent position before he came here. It must have been, psychologically, a very difficult thing for him to be thrust into the midst of a congregation such as Temple Emanu-El. But he took it in his stride. He had a great deal of assurance even then.

The first time he spoke everybody was amazed and delighted with him. Of course, that was one of the reasons Harold Zellerbach brought him

Rinder: out here. He had heard him speak and was so pleased with him because he has a way with words that's really phenomenal. From the first, we who attended services regularly used to sit bemused listening to him every Saturday morning. It was a great pleasure. He was a magnificent preacher and a very fine human being, a very sensitive person. Thank God, he and my husband got along beautifully. They appreciated each other and they worked together so well. They were both perfectionists and they liked to see everything done just right. That was perhaps the happiest time of our years here. We admired him and loved him, a wonderful person.

Chall: It must have been quite a relief then, after what you'd been through.

I found a letter among your papers, from Rabbi Newman who was writing to you shortly after Rabbi Fine came into the community. He uses two words which, unfortunately, I don't recognize. He says, "We know that Emanu-El must seem very different to you and to everyone else now that the 'kelalah' has been lifted and the 'berakhah' has descended."

Rinder: Those are Hebrew words.

Chall: Can you translate "kelalah"?

Rinder: "Berakhah" is a blessing. "Kelalah" is like a plague.

Chall: Perhaps that explains what people felt was going on here over those years, so that the coming of Rabbi Fine must have been a breath of fresh air, since everybody liked him.

Rinder: Yes, it was delightful. A beautiful time of our lives.

Chall: Now, he was very young and he had to come into a community that had been really rent--torn, as you say. The Sunday School was diminished in size and he really had to start building again. He had to heal the breach and start building the community.

Rinder: And he succeeded in doing it. He soon had a large following. Everything had been very much neglected, and we needed a dynamic personality to take over and bring back the congregation to a different level, where there'd be an increase in membership and children in the Sunday School. Almost immediately we saw a change. The young people began attending and everybody was very much interested in what he had to say--and he had much to say. From the very beginning, we found that he was a magnificent preacher. He spoke beautifully. It was a delight. I could listen to him just recite the Ten Commandments or the alphabet even, almost anything.

Chall: He came, however, as a very liberal thinker and a Zionist into a

Chall: congregation that had been spending sixteen years at least with a most conservative kind of thinking and leadership, anti-Zionist. How did this strike the congregation?

Rinder: As I think I said before, the congregation as a whole was liberal in that it permitted its preachers--it was a free pulpit--and the rabbis could voice their opinion. There was nothing very controversial going on at the time with regard to Israel. It was in existence and we went on from there. Everybody took it for granted then. Occasionally he'd come out with some remark that perhaps a few people disagreed with, but nobody took great exception to. So that was all right. He never had any problem because of where he stood, either politically or with regard to Israel.

Chall: Did it give a feeling of relief or encouragement to the people who, like you, were pro-Zionist, pro-Israel, and had thought differently all these years and remained sort of quietly in the background?

Rinder: Indeed yes. It was as though a fresh wind was blowing through the congregation and blowing away the cobwebs and the staleness of everything. Everybody was very much relieved. Everybody talked and said what they believed, and it was really a wonderful thing. Many of the Hadassah members who had resigned returned to the congregation and it was all a very happy family for a long time.

Chall: And in your relationships with people outside of the Emanu-El community who probably had watched this problem, how did they react? Do you recall?

Rinder: Oh, he was accepted. As you know, he was placed on numerous committees in the community, Jewish and non-Jewish. Toward the end he was on television for a number of years, and he became very well known in the community, much admired and very well liked.

Chall: There is a Mrs. Fine. What kind of a rebbitsin was she?

Rinder: Oh, there is a beautiful Mrs. Fine. Did you see her that day?

Chall: No, I was in the rabbi's office.

Rinder: Oh, I'm sorry you didn't meet her. She's a lovely human being. She's sweet. She's not trained to be a rebbitsin. She comes from the deep South. She still has a little southern accent. One of her grandmothers was not Jewish, and she was raised in a very reformed home. I don't know whether they were even affiliated with the synagogue down there.

She had been married to Lloyd Ackerman, Jr., and he was killed during the war. She had a seven-year-old son when she first met Rabbi

Rinder: Fine. It was love at first sight. And in a couple of months they were married, and my husband performed the wedding ceremony. So you see how legal he became. Everybody wept, it was so beautiful. She had on a short white Dior gown--Dior was in the ascendancy at that time. She's blonde, blue-eyed, tall and willowy, and beautiful. She was so lovely then that it took your breath away. She's still lovely; she's a little older now. I love her dearly. We've remained friends. I don't see her very often. As I say, she wasn't trained to be a rebbitsin, so she too took the situation rather hard, as he did. But she's much happier now that they're out of it.

Relationship With Cantor Rinder

Chall: So there was a renewal.

Rinder: Oh quite, yes. In spite of that, my husband continued . . . One of the things that Rabbi Fine found almost a little galling about the rabbinate was being like the shepherd of his flock; he didn't like that. He enjoyed preaching, he enjoyed a certain amount of contact with the congregants, but he didn't enjoy the other factors that go along with the position, what are called pastoral duties. Those were irksome to him.

Consequently, my husband--in spite of the fact that they all loved Rabbi Fine--my husband continued to attend to these. And people continued calling on him for weddings and funerals. Rabbi Fine, no matter how he felt about it, never showed any antagonism and remained very friendly.

Chall: He may have been happy to have had somebody assume these duties who loved to do them.

Rinder: I don't know; I hope so.

Changes in Ritual

Chall: What kinds of changes in temple ritual or anything else do you recall in Rabbi Fine's period?

Rinder: Rabbi Fine inaugurated the wearing of the tallis. And also, we began to chant the Kiddush at Friday evening services.

Chall: I see. And your husband did this.

Rinder: My husband did this, of course. And we had the kindling of the lights by some female member of the congregation. That continues to this day. We have the vesper service on Friday evening from five-thirty to six in the chapel. Our main service is Saturday morning, which is a rare thing in the country today. There are a few large congregations: Temple Emanu-El in New York has its important service in the morning, well attended. Have you ever been there?

Chall: No.

Rinder: Magnificent temple. And we and several large congregations hold the main service in the morning.

Chall: This was done when you came. Has this always been so?

Rinder: It has always been so, throughout the fifty odd years and before. The main service is Saturday morning.

Chall: Is it attended in the large Temple or in the chapel?

Rinder: In the main Temple. The Friday evening service is in the chapel; it's a vesper service. If it's a late service, as it has been throughout the years off and on, being held at eight-fifteen, then it's in the sanctuary in the main Temple.

Chall: I attended a bar mitzvah there on a Friday night.

Rinder: There was one year when the Sunday School attendance was so large and there were so many boys being bar mitzvahed, that we had to have Friday evening bar mitzvahs plus Saturday morning bar mitzvahs throughout the year. And that's when you were there. And there were always handsome parties afterwards held in our Guild Hall. I prefer them in the morning.

Chall: Because there were more bar mitzvahs, did that indicate that Sunday School was beginning to fill up?

Rinder: That's right, yes.

Chall: Was there a change in the curriculum to bring them back, or was it just the rabbi's presence?

Rinder: No, it was just the rabbi's presence; there wasn't much change as I recall. I wouldn't know about the curriculum in the Sunday School but that wouldn't make any difference. Children would not know beforehand that any changes had been made. They just came in large

Rinder: numbers because membership increased greatly under Rabbi Fine.

Rabbi Meyer Heller

Chall: During Rabbi Fine's period, there was an assistant Rabbi Heller. You had told me once before that assistant rabbis were usually doing the less important pulpit tasks. Was his relationship the same as the other assistant rabbis through the years or did he assume more duties?

Rinder: Relationship toward whom?

Chall: Toward the congregation and toward Rabbi Fine.

Rinder: You see, Rabbi Fine is an unusually fine person with regard to this as well as many other things. And he was wonderful to Rabbi Heller, both as a friend and as a senior rabbi. He put him forward whenever he could. They alternated in preaching, as they do today. And every opportunity Rabbi Fine had, he put him in the foreground and gave him important jobs to do, so that he had a very fine opportunity for learning the art of the rabbinate to such an extent that he could take over any position after he left us. It was unfortunate that he stayed a little longer than most assistant rabbis do, because it was a very difficult thing to pull up stakes when he left and go to another congregation. But he finally did.

Rabbi Joseph P. Weinberg

Chall: What about Rabbi Weinberg who came after Rabbi Heller left? He seemed to have quite a following in the community, but he didn't stay.

Rinder: Oh yes. He was very much beloved, but he didn't stay for the same reason that most assistants do not stay. They go on to positions of their own. Rabbi Weinberg wanted to get his Ph.D. and so he moved over to Berkeley. He accepted a minor job, for weekends only, I think, and proceeded to work for his Ph.D.

Chall: Had there been any thought that he might replace Rabbi Fine?

Rinder: No, never. He was very young when he came; he was still young when

Rinder: he left. He came with the understanding that he was to stay only two or three years. But he made himself felt in the community and he had quite a following.

Chall: I noticed from the letters that he seemed to have been thought of very highly.

Rinder: Very highly, yes. He preached well, he was beloved by the children in the Sunday School, a very fine person. His wife was a great help. She was interested in the children in the Sunday School also. She would help when her services were required. Very active.

Cantor Rinder Retires

Chall: During this period too, I understand--I use this word lightly--your husband retired, in 1959. [Laughter] Apparently, it has no meaning because I'm not sure that he actually retired--in the literal meaning of that term.

Rinder: No meaning! It was at my urging. I felt that he had worked so hard he ought to have a few years of quiet and peace and not the strain and stress. I mean, there were times in the year, around the High Holidays and various other times when it was really very trying. I think it was more trying for me, however, as I look back upon it now, than it was upon him. But I thought that was what would be good for him. When he realized what it might mean, when he finally told the people, when he first suggested it--young Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr. was president--Morty begged him to stay on. So he stayed on.

When he was seventy-two, in 1959, we felt that was a good time, so Rob finally asked to be retired. Unhappily, he was in the hospital at the time, he had undergone an operation, and the president, thinking that he would be overjoyed to hear that the board had decided to retire him, came to the hospital and told him about it. I assure you he almost had a relapse, it was so traumatic. I didn't know it would be so. I just ate my heart out afterwards because it was at my urging--he never wanted to step down.

I really thought it wasn't fair to the Temple. He wasn't chanting any more at the time. He used to read his part of the service and one of the members of the choir, mostly Stanley Noonan, with a magnificent voice, would chant the cantorial parts. Rob would just read his part. Well, that really wasn't fair to the congregation,

Rinder: I thought. If they wanted a cantor, and I think Rabbi Fine wanted a cantor--you know, he comes of the old tradition, he believes in that . . . So I urged my husband to retire.

But they elected him Cantor for Life at the time. So happily, he continued to sit on the pulpit. He participated in the service, less than formerly because by then they went out to select another cantor. This was when Cantor Portnoy was brought out and elected in his place. So he had much less to do, of course.

Cantor Portnoy, by the way, has a tenor voice. It's a very sympathetic sweet voice and very charming. But most synagogue music lends itself, to my mind, better to baritone voices. But perhaps I'm prejudiced. My husband's voice was baritone. Most of the library of music he collected, which is very extensive and is still in the Temple, is for baritone voices. The commissioned services by Bloch, Milhaud and Lavry were written for baritones.

Chall: What was the relationship between Cantor Rinder and Cantor Portnoy?

Rinder: Very friendly.

But to go back, Rob continued in other capacities in the community and in the congregation. But he stayed on the pulpit until the very day he took ill. It was right up on the pulpit. He was up above, where the reading from the Torah was done. And as he was reading, I noticed a little thickening of his speech. Our president, who was then Dr. Ernest Rogers, noticed that immediately and he looked at him. And then he looked down at me. Rob finished, hesitantly. Then as he walked down the steps, Dr. Rogers held him by the arm and helped him down. He took a seat; he came home that afternoon and he never returned to the pulpit. That's when he first took sick.

Chall: And it was as sudden and apparent as that.

Rinder: The next day his speech was so strange and garbled that I couldn't understand what he was saying.

Chall: What had happened?

Rinder: Well, they found that he had a tumor on the brain. There was no other symptom, no pain of any kind, no headaches, just an impediment in his speech and a loss of memory of certain things like names, for instance. This was gradual.

The speech returned, but of course, I called the doctor and things began to happen. He was taken to the hospital for tests. Then there were consultations with a surgeon. It was decided that they

Rinder: operate to make sure what it was because you can't tell about these things until you investigate. They did, and of course they couldn't do very much. It was just exploratory.

But there were many months where he sat here very comfortably, didn't do very much. Later some of the medication which they gave--there were new things coming out continually--and some of the medication was phenomenal. One day his speech would be garbled and the next day he would be speaking as clearly as you and I. It was really remarkable and we thought, that's it, he's cured. We'd take him home. He went back and forth to the hospital. Several months would pass. He was ill for almost a year.

Chall: Was he able to carry on any of his pastoral activities?

Rinder: Oh no, everything stopped. He just stayed home. I took him for a ride occasionally in the afternoon. After a while, even that stopped. Then there was the terminal period when he had nurses. First at the hospital, and then when I brought him home, I rented a hospital bed and a wheelchair and all the necessary things. He wasn't in pain, he just couldn't get around. And I had nurses around the clock for about a month here.

Chall: He was active to the last though, which is remarkable for a career like his.

Rinder: Yes. You see, he was still, he was seventy-nine--no, he took ill in November of '65 and he passed away in September of '66. So in February of that year, he became seventy-nine. He was seventy-eight when he took ill. Thank God he passed away quietly and peacefully. We were all at his bedside. My son had come out on his vacation with his family. He had been here in December when his father was operated on. He was here for a few days and then he went back. But in September, he had come out with his family, his wife and his two children, and they were here that evening to have dinner with us.

At about six o'clock, the nurse came in. We were in the living room. She said to come quickly. She was an old professional nurse and had been with terminal cases for a long time. So we went with her and found him breathing very heavily; he didn't know us. And then his breathing stopped. And there we all were around the bed. I was very grateful that he wasn't conscious at the end because I think it must be agony to know you're going, and that he wasn't in pain throughout.

He had numerous discomforts after a while from all this medication. But the nurses were wonderful and helped him and made him comfortable. Thank God, I was able to have them and to give him all the comforts

Rinder: that he possibly needed, for which I was very grateful. So far as that goes, I have no regrets. But to this day, when I look around in the Temple and see men much older than he sitting there, I resent it. Because he was so young in so many ways.

Chall: That's what everybody said.

Rinder: His spirit was remarkable and he looked so young. His face was smooth and beautiful to the end. He had all his hair, lovely silver hair. I shall never forget, some people came to services one Friday night, a rabbi and his wife from down South, and she said, "Who is that?" and I said, "That's Cantor Rinder, my husband." She said, "Oh, what a beautiful man." I mean, that's how she described him. He was--a beautiful smile and a beautiful face.

Chall: Well, people still remark about the two of you . . .

Rinder: Did you ever see him?

Chall: I did, the night of the bar mitzvah. I had the same reaction. [Laughter] It was a most impressive service.

Rabbi Fine Retires

Chall: How did the congregation react to the rabbi's decision to leave?

Rinder: Oh, everybody was heartbroken; they didn't like it at all. They begged him to stay. Everybody begged him to stay. But he left on the grounds that he wasn't too well. This was a couple years after his heart attack. I think it was true; he isn't a very robust and strong person. Since he gave that as an excuse, there was nothing we could do about it. And so they started looking for someone else.

Chall: Sixteen years is a long time, unless like Cantor Rinder it's your whole life.

Rinder: Well, there are very few who have that length of service, and very few, if ever, a rebbitsin or a chazanta has been with one congregation only. As a rule, you go from one post to another until you reach the heights. My husband reached the height at the age of twenty-six. He was twenty-six years old when he took this position and he was here for ten months and then he came back East and we were married. We came out here and I've been here ever since.

Temple Leadership

Chall: I wanted to find out something about the Temple leadership at the time. Of course, Harold Zellerbach was Temple president when Rabbi Fine was hired, and Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr. came later.

Rinder: Harold Zellerbach took a very active part at the time and he was very generous to the Temple; whenever they needed money his hand was in his pocket. He really was very generous. He contributed largely to things that needed doing at the Temple. He never missed a service. He was always in the back of the Temple counting heads, making sure we had a good attendance. And also counting the minutes--he objected to too lengthy services. [Laughter] So if an anthem was a minute too long, we'd hear from him. Or if a sermon was too long, he was always looking at his watch. [Laughter]

It was really rather distressing. The rabbi preaching didn't see it, but we would see him looking at his watch. [Laughter] But he was a dear. He really had the welfare of the congregation at heart. He was on for quite a number of years. He was such a devoted and good president that when his term of office was over, the members of the board gave him a very handsome farewell dinner at the Fairmont Hotel.

Chall: How was Mr. Fleishhacker?

Rinder: Well, he too was devoted. He came, he and his wife, attended services regularly.

Chall: I thought that was always the duty of the temple president.

Rinder: Oh, while he was president, they attended services every Friday night. He was very faithful and loyal, a darling person. Both of them are charming. They look young; they too have the youthful spirit. They're grandparents now. To look at them, you wouldn't think so.

Chall: Louis Heilbron?

Rinder: Louis Heilbron is still a very dear friend. He's a very intelligent, brilliant lawyer with a delightful sense of humor. Naturally he had to preside at all the meetings. And it was a delight to hear him because he always had something humorous to say, especially at the annual meetings, which can be a bore. A man gets up and gives a detailed account of the activities of the congregation. Mr. Heilbron would always inject something amusing and it was a pleasure to hear him. He was the master of ceremonies at the time of my husband's forty-fifth anniversary--he was known to be so good at that.

Rinder: At the banquet, he was so humorous that there was continual laughter throughout the proceedings. A delightful person and he and his wife, Delli, who is a very charming person, have remained my very good friends.

Chall: What can you say about Judge Albert Wollenberg? He was the president for four years.

Rinder: He made a splendid president. He's a very fine, true gentleman, a wonderful person. He was a lesser judge than he is today; now he has to travel around a great deal to outlying communities. Then, he was stationed here and that's why he was able to accept this position. He was very faithful. He went to services regularly. His wife was always with him, Velma, a charming person. I don't recall very much the activities that went on during that period. Was this during Rabbi Fine's time?

Chall: Yes, this was 1958 to 1962.

Rinder: A very fine person and still a loyal member of the congregation.

Chall: Then following him was Samuel Jacobs for a couple of years. Do you have fond memories of him?

Rinder: Very fond, yes, we were very great friends. He was devoted to my husband too. He's a different type. He's an attorney too. A delightful person with a wonderful sense of humor, a much lighter touch than Judge Wollenberg had, in his personality, in his actions, in his speech--in every way. He's a very conscious Jew.

He attended services together with his brother regularly, long before he became an officer of the congregation, or even as a member of the board. At the present time, his brother George is on the board; Samuel Jacobs no longer is. But he's very much interested and frequently sits on committees of importance and takes an active role and still attends services regularly--Friday evening, Holidays certainly. The synagogue has great meaning to him and to his brother.

Chall: After that, I believe it was Dr. Rogers, although he must have been president after Rabbi Fine left.

Rinder: There was another fine person. Dr. Rogers was president during my husband's last years with the congregation. During Rob's illness, Dr. Rogers was most attentive. He called on him frequently, not professionally but as a friend. He was a devoted and loyal president, attending services regularly, as did his darling wife, "Babs," a life-long friend of my daughter.

Rinder: As you may have noted, we have been very fortunate in our presidents, all fine,noble, intelligent gentlemen, men of integrity with a strong attachment to their people and their religion.

Anniversary Celebrations

Chall: During this period, there appeared to be a musical renaissance at Temple Emanu-El. From 1948 until 1964, it was one thing after another of musical significance, many to celebrate anniversaries of the Temple and anniversaries of Cantor Rinder's years of service.* In all of these special events, I assume that your husband must have been rather busy directing and putting things together.

Rinder: Yes. He had a huge choir. Besides our own Temple choir, he had a volunteer chorus of probably one hundred. He sent out notices to the singers. He had a list of singers in the community. He rehearsed them weeks ahead and he was busy with the printing of programs and getting everything in order for the occasion.

Chall: He would oversee the entire production, is that it?

Rinder: Oh yes, indeed.

Chall: He was now well into his sixties during these years, and yet as the Temple sponsored one major event after another, he must have been so busy. Apparently, he had quite a bit of stamina as well as love for what he was doing.

Rinder: Oh yes, yes.

Chall: Rabbi Fine told me that "for a man who seemed so gentle and otherworldly, when it came to conceiving, planning and putting on these superb creations, he could be determined, indefatigable, and effective."

In 1958, Cantor Rinder was celebrating his forty-fifth anniversary with the congregation.

Rinder: That was the most important celebration of all. That was the time when Louis Newman came out as the speaker at the banquet. Then there was a musical evening on Friday.

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*Specific discussion of musicians has been placed in Chapter III.

CONGREGATION EMANU-EL

ARGUELLO BOULEVARD AND LAKE STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

SABBATH EVE SERVICE

and

MUSIC FROM THE SACRED SERVICES

by

ERNEST BLOCH

FREDERICK JACOBI

MARC LAVRY

DARIUS MILHAUD

in honor of

CANTOR REUBEN R. RINDER

After forty five years of service to Congregation Emanu-El

MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CHORUS

THE TEMPLE EMANU-EL CHOIR

MEMBERS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

STANLEY NOONAN, *Soloist*

CANTOR REUBEN R. RINDER, *Recitant*

LUDWIG ALTMAN, *Organist*

EDWARD B. LAWTON, *Conductor*

MARC LAVRY, *Guest Conductor*

RABBI ALVIN I. FINE

RABBI MEYER HELLER

FRIDAY EVENING AT 8:00 O'CLOCK

FEBRUARY TWENTY-FIRST, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHT

Chall: There was a musical evening with selections by Bloch and Jacobi (Lavry was once again in town) and Milhaud.

Rinder: There were excerpts from their various services.

Chall: Then you had dinner in the Gold Room of the Fairmont Hotel. Judge Wollenberg spoke and all the rabbis and Temple leaders were present. Music with Leona Gordon, Stern, Menuhin, Lavry. Was it at this time that Isaac Stern spoke?

Rinder: Yes. He was introduced by the presiding officer, saying that anybody can hear Isaac Stern play, but very few people have heard him speak and therefore we are to have the privilege of hearing him speak. [Laughter] Yehudi Menuhin was not present but he had sent a recording of good wishes for this occasion and he also played a number for the occasion.

Chall: This must have been an exciting weekend.

Rinder: Oh yes.

Chall: For months ahead, I'm sure your husband was working to put on this musical service. When he was able to relax and have dinner in the Gold Room in his honor, then how did he feel?

Rinder: Oh, on top of the world. [Laughter] These things are very exhilarating and exciting. He enjoyed his work, everything connected with it. He was tired but simply thrilled with the whole occasion. It was really very beautiful.

Chall: Your husband would arrange the musical portion of these various celebrations, and committees would look after the receptions and dinners, was that it?

Rinder: Yes, the Temple committee. The Temple board would appoint a committee to attend to these things. For the forty-fifth anniversary, there was also a reception down in Guild Hall following the musical program upstairs. It was the most beautiful thing. I must show you a picture of the room, the decorations.

It's interesting to note. The boards continually changed, of course; I mean, every couple of years new members would come on, every year in fact. But always there was this warm affectionate feeling toward my husband, even by the younger ones who hadn't had close contact with him. He had married a great many of them, he had bar mitzvahed them and in the course of the years, it was more and more so. So there was a very warm feeling throughout.

Chall: In 1962, there was no special program celebrating your husband's

October 22, 1957

Mr. Marc Lavry
c/o Mr. Isidore Rosenberg
46 East 91st Street
New York 28, New York

Dear Marc:

I was delighted to receive your letter and to hear the good news that you are coming to the United States.

I want to thank you for your complimentary words about me. I am not conscious of having done more than what was my duty to do in the field of sacred music and in trying to advance cultural activities here and in Israel.

Plans for the 45th Anniversary of my association with Temple Emanu-El are now being formulated but we are still uncertain as to the exact dates of the celebration. We shall be, of course, most happy to have you as a participant in this event. We are considering the end of February or the first two weeks in March as tentative dates, depending upon several factors involved. I hope this will not interfere with your plans here or in Israel. Mr. Freehof will, of course, keep you informed regarding further developments in this matter. We may come to a more definite decision by the time you arrive in New York. In that case, I shall personally get in touch with you and inform you of what the time and what is being planned.

Rowie and I are very happy that Ellen is with you on this trip. It would be inconceivable otherwise. We are looking forward with great pleasure to seeing you both here. In the meantime, our best wishes for a pleasant visit in this country.

With greetings to you and our love to Ellen,

Sincerely,

RRR:bc

Reuben R. Rinder

Chall: seventy-fifth birthday but there was a resolution unanimously adopted by the board of directors of Congregation Emanu-El to commemorate this birthday.

Rinder: That happened because we didn't want any further celebration, we had had so many. We went to Carmel and took our family with us and celebrated it there with a dinner with the family.

Chall: Oh. That's the evening that Ellen wrote her poem?

Rinder: Yes. She wrote a poem to grandfather.

Chall: You had a fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1964, and went off to New York to celebrate and to see your father who was ninety-four at the time.

Rinder: Yes, and the rest of our family; and the only outsiders were Rabbi and Mrs. Newman, at which time he composed the poem in our honor.

Executive Secretaries

Rinder: I find that I haven't mentioned the executive secretaries, four of them, who functioned during my husband's association with the Temple. The first whom I recall, but vaguely, was Mr. Kahn. Next came Seymour Gabriel, a quiet, pleasant, able secretary.* After him came Louis Freehof, brother of the famous Rabbi Sol Freehof. Louis Freehof was a character, but a delightful character. He was warm, friendly, a complete extravert, eager to please everyone and succeeding--just the man for such a post. The members loved him and were extremely sorry to see him go when he was offered a much more lucrative position with Sinai Memorial.

After him came Marvin Schoenberg, the present executive. He's a completely different type, an introvert, quiet, almost self-effacing, but a wonderful person. He's able, a man of great integrity, much admired and respected, especially by the president and officers of the congregation--those who have any contact with him.

I know that my husband was on good terms with all of them, indeed on very friendly terms.

---

*Sigmund Ottenheimer followed.

LOUIS I. NEWMAN
NEW YORK

TO ROB AND ROWIE RINDER

June 30th, 1964

There's nothing, friends, to halt or hinder,
My song to Rob and Rowie Rinder,
'Tis fifty years since they were married;
'Tis only joy the years have carried.

The family is proud tonight,
That Rob and Rowie made their flight,
To meet with us at this hotel,
Where all of us can wish them well.

I still recall the fateful day,
When Rob went blithely on his way,
To marry Rowie in the East,—
A wondrous time, to say the least.

In Rodeph Sholom, they were hitched,
For Rowie had her Rob bewitched;
How often of his love he's told 'er,
Although they've grown a wee bit older.

Oh, Rabbis come and Rabbis go,
But Rob is like a river's flow,
For on and on from year to year,
The Temple's destiny he'd steer.

Bar Mitzvah boys he's trained a-plenty,
To Bris-es and to weddings went he,
The Services he's brought to pass,
Have gladdened many a lad and lass.

He's written melodies to charm the soul,
And from his spirit hymns would roll,
His books of prayer have found acclaim,
And built the lustre of his name.

He's raised disciples by the score,
Menuhin, Stern, and more and more,
They play the fiddle far and wide,
For Rob was patron, friend and guide.

LOUIS I. NEWMAN
NEW YORK

2.To Rob and Rowie Rinder, June 30th, 1964

And Rowie, just like Helen Hayes,
Is cute and charming in her ways;
She watches Rob with wifely care;
To cross her wish--Rob doesn't dare!

Composers write at Rob's behest,
For Rob's commissions are the best;
He'd fill the Temple seat for seat;
Oh no one can our Reuben beat!

Ben Haim, Lavry, Milhaud, Bloch,
Have made Emanu-El like a rock,
Because our Rob has gathered dough
And told them: you do thus and so.

Oh, San Franciscans way out West,
In Rob and Rowie know they're blest,
And as for me, my favorite Kinder
Are Rob and lovely Rowie Rinder!

Ellen's poem for Rob's 75th birthday

There in the Temple,
In front of the mob,
You find their savior,
Grandpa Rob.

He can be found at funerals,
Carrying the torah,
Conducting a wedding
Or near any menorah.

As much as I dislike it,
I must discuss his flaws.
Rowie waits in the background
While he gets all the applause.

Now, Rowie I know
Would never dread it
If she got what she deserves,
A little credit.

For once in our living room
Rob's mind went blank, he sighed,
And Rowie wrote the entire eulogy
For someone who had died.

But Rob is an artist,
He's a jack of all trades
Except, of course,
When his memory fades.

I don't like to discuss this
But it's part of him. You too'll find it.
He's been reported upon occasion
To be slightly absent-minded.

But it's no wonder,
You also it would confuse
To have to remember
So much about Jews.

He never asks my boy friends
To what school they went,
But it's always, are they
Of Jewish descent.

Consider yourself honored
If Rob you are seeing,
For he is a great, great
Human being.

And so I wish a wonderful birth
For one of the nicest men on earth.

Written by Ellen Kauffman

V EXTRAMURAL ACTIVITIES

Chall: I'd like to talk about Cantor Rinder's extramural activities. There seems to have been a great amount of this kind of thing.

Rinder: Did you look through the list to see what these things were? I haven't.

Chall: I have. I've divided these into: writing music, writing the book, Music and Prayer, lecturing and singing, the American Guild of Organists, then a variety of other things.

Writing Music

"Kol Nidre"

Chall: What about this adaptation that your husband wrote of Kol Nidre, first edition some time in the early 1930's, and then a revised edition in 1947, both of which, of course, were published. I understand that in 1937, on the Day of Atonement, he sang Kol Nidre over a national CBS hookup. Can you remember anything about the actual publishing of this work? Wasn't it sung in Reform congregations?

Rinder: No, it hadn't been sung for many years, if ever, in Reform congregations. There had to be some revision because part of the prayer consisted of a prayer to God to forgive them for all the false vows they had made. During the Spanish Inquisition, the Jews who had been forced to convert to Christianity held secret services. At these Jewish services, they chanted the Kol Nidre which contained the prayer, "Forgive us for all the false vows we have vowed." Therefore my husband eliminated that prayer in the revised edition because there was no need for it.

A New Edition With Original and Revised Text

כל נדרי

KOL NIDRE

By REUBER R. RINDER

FOR CANTOR, MIXED CHOIR AND ORGAN OR A-CAPELLA

Suitable for Orthodox, Conservative or Reform Synagogues

50 CENTS

BLOCH PUBLISHING CO.

A REVISED EDITION OF RINDER'S "KOL NIDRE"

A second edition of the Kol Nidre by Cantor Reuben R. Rinder, with a revised text, is now ready. The first edition, published in 1930, is entirely sold out. More than one hundred and fifty congregations throughout the country have used this Kol Nidre and it was broadcast in 1937 over the entire world.

In addition to the revised text, the music of the new edition is set to the traditional text, thus making this Kol Nidre available to Orthodox and Conservative as well as Reform congregations. It is written for cantor organ and choir. Where no organ is used, this Kol Nidre may be rendered *a capella* by the choir.

The music of the Kol Nidre is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Jewish people. The purpose of this new edition, with the revised text, is to reinstate it in the service of congregations of liberal tendencies in which it had been eliminated because of the archaic form of the old text. The revised text is a prayerful verse, expressive of the spirit and underlying thought of the Eve of Atonement.

The publication of this second edition is particularly timely since the newly revised Union Prayer Book, for the first time in the history of Reform Judaism in America, makes provision for the chanting of the Kol Nidre.

Cantor Rinder has been associated with Temple Emanu El of San Francisco since 1913. He has taken an active part in fostering the creation of a musical literature for the synagogue which would be expressive of its traditional spirit and of the modern tendencies affecting it. He has composed a number of liturgical compositions and has been instrumental in commissioning outstanding composers to write complete music services for the Sabbath. (Bloch, 50c)

Rinder: This was really quite an important revision and it became a regular part of the Temple service. In fact, at our Temple Emanu-El here, the singing of Kol Nidre opened the service of Yom Kippur evening.

Chall: I remember this but I'm wondering if I really remember it before 1930.

Rinder: Did you attend Conservative or Orthodox synagogues?

Chall: Reform.

Rinder: Always Reform--you don't remember whether it was given before or not?

Chall: No, maybe I wasn't aware of it until I was a little older. I do remember the Kol Nidre though.

Rinder: What did they call those Jews in Spain who practiced Judaism clandestinely? Oh yes--Moranos. There were thousands of Jews who did this very thing. They espoused Christianity but continued to feel that they were Jews.

Chall: As a matter of fact, it was only last year that Jews were allowed to open up a synagogue again in Spain.

Rinder: Yes. And that broadcast of my husband's revised Kol Nidre was a very important and thrilling event. That evening all over the world at a given time, this version of my husband's was being sung.

Chall: How did this radio broadcast come about?

Rinder: Somebody on the board suggested it. That's a difficult thing to achieve, you know; not everybody can. But Temple Emanu-El is in a position to do so, and so it was arranged. It was really very gratifying for all of us. Rob sang with the choir. It's almost like a conversation. He sings a sentence and they reply. That's part of the arrangement. But there is a definite tune to it, you know, which has been sung through the years. My husband modernized it and rearranged it and made it more singable.

Chall: Is it still sung on Kol Nidre evening here?

Rinder: Oh yes, to this day.

"Benediction"

Chall: I found among the papers a piece of music called "Benediction" (and

Chall: they're rarely dated), but it was written by Cantor Rinder and revised in 1965. Do you remember that?

Rinder: I think it's the Three-fold Benediction which both Jews and Christians use at the close of the service: "May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord cause His Face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up His Countenance upon you and give you peace." He set that to music.

In commemoration of the founding of the United Nations [Convocation of Religion For World Peace, June 27, 1965] here in San Francisco, there was to be a service held at the Cow Palace of all the religions--the Catholics, the Protestants, the Jews, and the Mohammedans. At the committee meeting, the question came up as to how to close this meeting. Who should close it, a Catholic, Protestant, or Jew? After much discussion, my husband suggested that possibly this Three-fold Benediction, sung by the chorus which would be there, would eliminate any individual being singled out to do it, and would satisfy all religions.

They were all delighted with this suggestion and it was simply beautiful because they had a huge choir--church and synagogue choirs of the entire city had joined to sing at the Cow Palace. It was a thrilling experience. And that's how the convocation closed.

Chall: I noticed in the program that they had given him credit for the Benediction.

Rinder: Yes. No individual blessed them but the choir sang it while everybody stood up.

"Battle Song of Zion"

Chall: In 1918, your husband composed the "Battle Song of Zion," for the Jewish Legion of Palestine during the First World War. The credits indicate that the music is by Reuben Rinder, the words by Marvin M. Lowenthal, and the Hebrew words by Moshe M'nuchin, father of Yehudi Menuhin. So that was quite a triumverate.

Rinder: Yes, yes. Marvin Lowenthal, at the time, was the Zionist representative who had an office here in San Francisco. I don't think we've had an office here since, but in those days there was one. The office later moved to Los Angeles. Moshe M'nuchin [Menuhin] was living here, teaching Hebrew, first at Temple Emanu-El, then at the Jewish Educational Society. He became involved later of course with his

Rinder: children's careers.

Chall: Well, it indicates that your husband and he were close at one time.

Rinder: Yes, very close.

"Hymn to Peace"

Chall: Then I have something here called the "Hymn to Peace," with words and music by Rinder, which has no date on it. But it is printed on the music that it is to be sung on Victory Day, Peace Day and Thanksgiving.

Rinder: It was sung in our Temple frequently on those occasions. I don't know how extensive the distribution was all over the country. We never found out. But it was a gratifying thing to have something by him sung, something we all recognized.

Chall: Was this a World War I composition, do you recall?

Rinder: Yes. It was after World War I.

Chall: Then in 1950, there's the Centennial Hymn for Emanu-El. So he apparently liked to write music.

Rinder: Oh yes.

Chall: How did he do that? Did he compose at the piano?

Rinder: Yes. He had a piano in his study at the Temple, so he worked there. Many of the things in his book, in his prayer book, were written by him. One of the things in the Day of Atonement Service, "We are Thy people, Thou art our King; we are Thy possession, Thou art our Maker," and so on, well, he set that to music. And we sing it to this day. Everybody stands up and sings it. It's a very catchy, charming little tune. And that's been incorporated into our service.

Music and Prayer : A Venture in Publishing

Chall: What about the writing of this book? All I can say is that the

September 5, 1957

Dr. Abraham Franzblau
40 West 68th Street
New York, New York

Dear Abe:

My manuscript, "Music and Prayers", is now on the plane and should reach you by tomorrow. It is registered, insured and sent Special Delivery, so it should reach you in good order, except for the enclosed page of the index which was inadvertantly left out. Please attach it to the Index as Page 7.

I have checked every word, phrase and sentence, page by page for corrections and I believe it is now ready for the printer.

The writing of this book was a challenging undertaking and I began to feel the strain, particularly now with the Holidays fast approaching, and other activities encroaching upon my time. Nevertheless, it was a labor of love. In fact, I was sorry to part with this child of my brain. Somehow, I feel that it will receive a warm welcome at your hands and that you will give it the sympathetic care and attention which it needs. But for your encouraging words about this work of mine, I do not see how I could have brought it to completion as I did. I gathered such a wealth of material that the problem of what to include, as I began writing the book, turned into the difficult task of deciding what to exclude. As an experienced writer, you can appreciate this kind of dilemma. However, I did manage to keep within the limit of 300 pages, realizing that in print, it may reach 350 including Milhaud's contribution, "Hear, My Children."

Aside from the contents of the book, the Board of Directors of my congregation expects something fine as far as the printing, the paper and the general format are concerned. They are most generous in sponsoring its publication. My hope now is that their confidence in the Sacred Music Press will be fully justified. You can be most helpful in producing a volume that will prove not only useful to congregations, but pleasing to the eye as well.

Your visit in San Francisco meant much to us, although altogether too short. I hope you will allow more time for this city on your next trip.

First page of letter written by Cantor Rinder to Dr. Franzblau.

Chall: correspondence that you gave me indicates that it started in 1956 and it ended in about 1961. Your husband seemed to have thought, in 1956, that this book would be finished within four or five months. But of course, it took several years. [Laughter]

Rinder: Much of the work was done one summer when we rented a house in Carmel Valley. He spent hours over it, rewriting some of the prayers and revising some of the music he had written. He did a very novel thing in this book; I don't know if you noticed. Have you seen the book?

Chall: No, I haven't.

Rinder: Here it is. Each prayer--as it is written and as it is to be sung or chanted--the music is right there within the service, not in the back of the book as in most prayer books. The music is right there. It's a very unique kind of book.

Chall: I see. It can be used right along with the Union Prayer Book.

Rinder: Yes, and it was a gratifying experience. He was no longer very young then, but it was the right time. He had accumulated all this material and the experience,and it was just the right time for him to do it. As a matter of fact, when he got through and the thing was printed, he admitted: "Today," he said, "I couldn't start on this." [Laughter] Then we had a very unhappy experience about the printing of it.

Chall: I could tell from the correspondence that at first there was some unhappiness about the printing.

Rinder: Yes. When the sheets were returned for proofreading, one evening I was sitting here proofreading some of it--my husband would read it first and correct and then I would go over it--and as I read it I realized that there were many words on a line. I began to count them and then I took down the Union Prayer Book and counted the words per line; I saw there were at least twice as many words on some of the lines as in the prayer book. And I thought, how are they going to print this? It would be a huge tome, so large and heavy that children could not hold the book. I called my husband's attention to it.

What had happened was they were printing it as it had been typewritten, instead of rearranging it for the size of a book. We were shocked and deeply distressed; we spent a sleepless night. The next morning, my husband telephoned to New York to inquire what all this was about. They hadn't realized what had happened. They had sent the material to Switzerland to be printed because it was cheaper there. It was done by the Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Institute of Religion. They had never done a work like this before. Rabbi

Rinder: Fine had suggested that we give it to them because a book like that should come from that place.

It took months and months, almost a year, to correct this. They had to begin all over again, reprinting it, rearranging it, and it cost us hundreds of dollars. They didn't have the money and if we wanted it printed, we just had to send the money for revision.

Chall: Is this why your husband referred occasionally to the fact that the Temple had provided the backing and therefore, he kept insisting that it be printed properly?

Rinder: Yes, yes.

Chall: I didn't understand why the Temple would have needed to back it, but I see now.

Rinder: Certainly. Hebrew Union College didn't have the money and somebody had to pay for these things. Many congregations bought the book. I think our board got back the money that they put out.

Chall: There's one letter that indicates that he received $183.50 in royalties for the year 1960-1961. I realize a person doesn't get rich on a book like this. [Laughter]

Rinder: No. God help us if we had had to live on that.

Lecturing on Jewish Music

Chall: There were many years of lecturing and singing, many of the lectures being singing lectures.

Rinder: Well, they were illustrated lectures on Jewish music. He would do the illustrating, of course. One year he had a cross-country tour stopping in many of the synagogues and Jewish centers on the way. That was a very gratifying experience for him.

Chall: How did he do that? Did he come back on weekends and then go off again?

Rinder: No, no, he just went on from place to place until he reached New York. He didn't go back and forth. He took off for a couple of weeks.

THE EMANU-EL FORUM
presents
REUBEN R. RINDER
Cantor of Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco
in a Lecture-Recital

"THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH MUSIC."
At
Temple Emanu-El, Los Angeles
Wednesday, May 9th, 1928 at 8:15 o'clock.

Cantor Rinder will be assisted by these artists;
Nina Lissauer, *Soprano;*
Maurice Amsterdam, *Cellist;*
Will Garoway, *Pianist.*

The following program will illustrate the successive phases in the development of Jewish music up to modern times.

PROGRAM

Cantillations:	Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings
Prayer Motives:	Sabbath, Festival, Holy Days
Improvisation on a Jewish Theme	
V'hakohanim (*Priestly Service*)	Traditional
Eli Zion	16th Century
Adon Olam by Solomon Rossi	17th Century
Psalm 49 "Hear this, All Ye People"	Sulzer
Three Jewish Pieces for Cello—	Ernest Bloch
a) Prayer	
b) Meditation	
c) Jewish Song	
Psalm 22 "Eli, Eli, Lama Asabtani—	Ernest Bloch
Kaddish (Traditional) arranged by Maurice Ravel	
Folk Songs (*Yiddish*)	
a) Estherka	
b) Little Sorele's Lamb	Saminsky
c) Reb Levi-Yitzchak's Dudele	
d) Of'n Pripetchik	
Folk Songs (*Hebrew*)	
a) Al Tal V'al Motor	
b) Hemdat Avoth	

Knabe Piano by courtesy of Platt Music Co.

Chall: I noticed too that Cantor Rinder sang two songs, one by Martini and one by Tchaikowsky, at a musicale sponsored by the Conference of Social Work, in February, 1921. He must have been doing some concert singing.

Rinder: Well, yes. He was called upon continually for his services.

Chall: Then by 1928 he was doing a considerable amount of lecturing on music. It was at that time we have that amusing letter from Portland that they want Cantor Rinder up there on such and such a date and will guarantee to pick him up here and fly him to Portland, guaranteeing to bring him back alive. [Laughter] Did he fly, do you remember?

Rinder: No, he took sick. I think it was psychosomatic. [Laughter] I was very fearful about this trip, particularly because it was to be a chartered plane, you know. They were to charter a plane to bring him up there. He never made it somehow. In those days, it was a risky thing.

Chall: Sometimes I notice that he would give his lecture, "The Development of Jewish Music," with soloists. At one time it was a piano, a cello, and a soprano. Other times he did it by himself, often with a piano.

Rinder: He may have combined these. There were numbers he would have to chant. He would start with a symbol of a prayer motif, and as he went on and talked of the Jewish music that had more recently been written, that required instruments; so he arranged for them to be present. For instance, there would be Ernest Bloch's music played and various others.

Chall: Did he ever put all of this onto a tape recorder?

Rinder: There may be some. I don't think so.

Chall: He was delivering this lecture all over, or variations of it, throughout the community and the country. I can tell by the letters. There are a couple of press releases from Monterey which indicated that he had given this kind of lecture in the Denny-Watraus Gallery, and it was quite well received. How did he happen to go down to Monterey?

Rinder: He was invited to.

Chall: Didn't you tell me an amusing story about Monterey? [Laughter]

Rinder: Well, he was an absent-minded professor type. I usually went with him on these trips. This time, I couldn't; I wasn't well. When I

April 26, 1928.

Memorandum of telephone conversation,
Mr. Bloch, San Francisco, and Mr. Ottenheimer, Portland,
3:30 PM. April 26, 1928.
(Mr.Ottenheimer calling)

Re.Cantor Rinder's
Participation in
Program of Congregation
Beth Israel:

Mr.Ottenheimer stated that they have arranged for a special airplane which is leaving Portland now, and will be at Corning tonight and at Mills Field by 11 o'clock tomorrow. Mr.Bloch asked if Mr. Rinder is willing to take the airplane, and Mr.Ottenheimer replied that he had said he would take the regular plane but it left at 4:30 in the morning, so they are having this special plane sent down for him.

Mr. Bloch suggested that they take out a special insurance policy, but Mr. Ottenheimer said they will guarantee to bring him back all right alive. Mr. Bloch asked if Mr. Ottenheimer has told Mr. Rinder of these arrangements, and Mr. Ottenheimer replied that he has not, as Mr. Rinder is at a funeral.

Mr.Ottenheimer said we should watch for the Portland special airplane from Rankin Field, and the plane has instructions to pick up Mr. Rinder at Mills Field.

Mr. Ottenheimer thanked Mr. Bloch for his wire of today.

LB.

K

cc-Mr.Rinder.

Rinder: went with him, I always did the packing. This time he packed for himself. When he arrived in Carmel, fortunately a day or two ahead of the scheduled concert, he discovered that he had forgotten to put in the trousers of his tuxedo. So he telephoned me and I had to get out of a sick bed to wrap and mail it posthaste. Fortunately, it got there in time. Everybody in the hotel had been alerted, so that as soon as it arrived it could be pressed and delivered to him.

He got to the lecture in time and it was a huge success, one of the greatest. They'd never heard anything like that down there. None of them was Jewish down there, none of those present I'm sure. They weren't familiar with any of these Hebrew melodies. They were knowledgeable people musically, musicians and artists and writers, and they would appreciate something like this.

Chall: They did. The woman who wrote the review was ecstatic.

Rinder: I used to meet these people afterwards. We went down to Carmel very frequently, and we'd drop into the Watraus Gallery and the other places. They never ceased talking about this experience. They never forgot it. In fact, they wanted him to repeat this but somehow he never had time.

Chall: I couldn't tell when it occurred because the press release wasn't dated.

Rinder: Well, it's a great many years ago. My children were young.

Chall: Then there was a Passover Music Festival at the St. Francis Hotel which was rather unique, with Cantor Rinder and the Temple choir, Cantor Rabinowitz from Beth Israel, and Louis Persinger.

Rinder: Oh, Mr. Persinger played. He was the concertmaster of our symphony.

Chall: Why would the Passover Music Festival be given at the St. Francis Hotel?

Rinder: It was during Passover week, I presume. It was just a music festival with the appropriate music of the holidays being presented.

Chall: What about Cantor Rabinowitz? He was at Temple Beth Israel for almost as long as your husband was here.

Rinder: Yes, he was there over fifty years also.

Chall: Was he close with your family?

Rinder: Oh yes, we were very good friends to the very end; we still are, with

Rinder: the children. They had four sons.

Chall: He was a Zionist too?

Rinder: Oh yes, we had that in common, as well as chazonis. And four brilliant sons; three are attorneys and one is a doctor. A Jewish mother's dream of heaven. Dr. Ralph became our family physician and devoted friend.

Chall: Was there a difference in style between the two cantors? Were they friendly rivals?

Rinder: Friendly but not rivals. Cantor Rabinowitz was much older, Conservative with a tenor voice, while my husband was a baritone in a Reform temple and young enough to be his son.

Chall: I have another notice that Cantor Rinder traced the historic development of Jewish music at an N.A.A.C.P. meeting in 1946. On the same program, Joseph James discussed the music of the Negro in America. That was to commemorate Negro History--a Brotherhood Week program.

Rinder: That sounds interesting. I don't recall that but that must have been a very interesting experience for him.

Chall: He gave a talk on Leonard Bernstein's Symphony #3, "Kaddish," at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Rinder: That was very well received.

Chall: It was given, I believe, just before the symphony played the "Kaddish."

Rinder: Oh yes, it was given at the music school out on 19th Avenue, the Conservatory of Music. They were delighted with it because it really made them understand the work much better. Most of the members are not Jewish and they did not know what it was all about. He clarified it for them and illustrated it, and it was really very worthwhile and they seemed to enjoy it very much.

Chall: I think he also referred to the fact that this music hadn't been totally well received among the music critics.

Rinder: They didn't understand it probably, so he helped them, yes.

Chall: I saw a thankyou letter from the San Francisco Browning Society.

Rinder: Yes, he gave one of these illustrated lectures. It was "The Poetry of the Psalms." It was really very appropriate. He spoke for about twenty minutes, explaining the music of the Psalms. This happened

71 EAST 77TH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

Sunday, February 7.
1965

Dear Friends:

Fred and I have a Subscription to the Metropolitan opera for alternating Saturday matinees. Yesterday, during an intermission, my neighbor, a very charming lady, from Short Hills, N. J., told me of what she termed a "high light" of a recent visit to her daughter living in San Francisco. They had plans to attend the symphony, during which program Leonard Bernstein's "Kaddesh" was to be performed. They read of a lecture to be given at the Conservatory the previous day and then my neighbor went into a rapturous description of the presentation, of the spirituality of the Cantor who gave it, of the high esteem in which he was held by the audience.

I knew, Rob, it must be you!

When I said "was his name Render?" she was amazed; You can't imagine the impression this experience made on her - She appeared to have absorbed the concept and was so deeply moved by it. I thought you might like to know how far reaching your effort was. I assume your father that my neighbor is non-Jewish.

I hope you are both well.

Fred and I expect to leave next week on the S.S. Argentina, Moore McCormack Line, for a five week cruise to South America, as far as Brazil and Argentina.

Fond wishes to you all.

Sincerely yours

Katherine D. Katz

Rinder: shortly after we had presented at our Temple, the "Three Psalms," for which we had commissioned Ben-Haim of Israel. These had been given in the Temple with orchestration and the choir, and it was done on a very grand scale. It had been taped at the time, so that he used the tape to illustrate this music. I never realized how thrilling that would be, hearing that in a small room.

The Browning Society used to meet at the Women's Athletic Club, as it was called then. That morning, so many people attended that they had to move to a much larger room. Still it was a comparatively small room compared to the Temple sanctuary. And this magnificent music coming forth in full force in all its glory--well, the women were simply thrilled.

It was just an unhappy day for us because it was given on November 22, 1963, the day that Kennedy was shot. As Rob got through and people were standing around congratulating him, somebody came into the room and told us that the President had been shot! We didn't know then that it had been fatal. But it was just that day and I shall never forget it. It was a very sad ending to a very glorious morning.

Chall: In the thankyou letter that I found among your papers, there's a notation, "fee returned." I wanted to ask you about the giving and returning of fees. I could tell from the correspondence that many organizations heard him give these kinds of talks and many of them sent him fees. Apparently he chose to return some. This was true too, I think, of his work with weddings, funerals and things of this kind.

Rinder: Fortunately, he didn't have to make his living by lecturing, so when he did have the occasion to lecture on music, it was something that he wanted to do--to disseminate the knowledge of Jewish music--and it was his pleasure to give it, so when an honorarium was sent to him, he invariably returned it.

It was different, of course, with the weddings and funerals because that was part of our livelihood. But on many occasions when he thought that people couldn't well afford the fee, or for one reason or another he felt that he preferred not to accept it, the fee would be returned.

American Guild of Organists

Chall: He was appointed chaplain of the American Guild of Organists in 1943.

Chall: I notice that he gave talks several times and was asked to give an invocation at another time.

Rinder: That was a very interesting period. It all began when Wallace Sabin, our organist, passed away. A year after his death, in commemoration of his death, a vesper service was held at Grace Cathedral. This was held at about four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, and my husband was approached to give the eulogy because he was the chaplain. That was a very moving experience. I think he was the first Jew who had ever spoken at Grace Cathedral. The place was crowded.

There's the processional that precedes the service, a processional of the ministers and all the dignitaries down the aisle. My husband was amongst them, of course, and he was seated next to the clergymen. Then he was escorted to the podium from which he was to speak. His eulogy was so well received that the Guild of Organists had it printed by the Grabhorn Press.

And Grace Cathedral was so pleased with the entire occasion that they suggested that the Guild of Organists hold a similar service once a year for a number of years. And at each of these, my husband, continuing to be the chaplain, spoke on various subjects that were appropriate, on "Music and Prayer of the Synagogue," "The Church and the Synagogue," and on "Albert Schweitzer." He appeared four or five times there.

Chall: This was a duty that he enjoyed.

Rinder: Oh yes, he enjoyed it very much and they did too. They thought he had done well or he wouldn't have been asked to come again, I assure you.

Arranging the Martin Buber Lecture

Chall: Your husband apparently made the arrangements for some lectures by Martin Buber.

Rinder: Yes, and we met him. He gave a lecture for our Men's Club here. It was really thanks to my husband that he came here. Rob read somewhere that Buber was to talk down south in Los Angeles. He brought it up before the Men's Club and said that it was unthinkable that Martin Buber should be in these parts and not come to San Francisco to speak. Some of the members had never even heard

Rinder: of Buber. This was quite a number of years ago--oh, it was 1950. After much discussion, they finally consented and arranged for him to come north to speak for us, and arranged for Buber to speak also at the University of California in Berkeley at noon on a Friday.

His wife was with him and my husband and I drove them to Berkeley. It was pouring cats and dogs, and we were terribly worried that there would be no one there. Who in the world would come to hear an unknown (we thought) speaker at the lunch hour on a rainy day? [Laughter] We didn't think students would have even heard of him, Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher!

Well, we got there and we found the room which had been assigned to him jam-packed and people standing outside not able to get in. We moved twice until we came to one of the larger rooms, a very large room, and even then, they stood around--there were not enough seats--while he spoke for an hour. A magnificent talk.

I'm happy to say that I understood what he was talking about at the time. I couldn't tell you today what it was. When he got through, they gave him a standing ovation. That was students during their lunch hour on a rainy day on a Friday! It was really thrilling. And the night before, he had spoken at our Temple, not in the sanctuary but in our auditorium, where he gave a lecture to the Men's Club and the members of the congregation.

Chall: Was it a different lecture?

Rinder: Yes, but very erudite and very philosophical.

Chall: Did he speak in Oakland? There was a correspondence that I saw that indicated that he was to speak in Oakland, and I wondered whether he had.

Rinder: I don't recall. If he did, somebody must have called for him and taken him there. I didn't. We just drove him to the University.

Chall: What kind of a person was he?

Rinder: Delightful, with a light touch, you know. Socially, he was very charming. He was a bearded gentleman. His wife looked like a typical Jewish mama. They were both very very lovely people to meet.

Chall: How was his English?

Rinder: Quite good, understandable. His vocabulary was very extensive. He had an accent, of course, East European accent.

Chall: Did he come for a service?

Rinder: I don't think so.

Meeting Helen Keller

Chall: I saw a picture of Helen Keller in Cantor Rinder's study when I went through it with Mr. Altman.

Rinder: [Leafing through scrapbook] Let me tell you what she says. "Helen Keller paid remarkable tribute to San Francisco Jewry. The following letter has been received by Rabbi Louis I. Newman from Miss Helen Keller, the noted American woman whose career, despite her blindness, is known throughout the world. It is a remarkable document and hence is brought to the attention of the readers of the Emanu-El."

She says, "Will you kindly convey a message from me to Cantor Rinder? I want him to know what joy his singing gave me. In thought, I still feel those rich vibrant tones of his voice, which made me realize more fully the depth and beauty of the Twenty-third Psalm. To my heart I take all your kindnesses and bless you for them. I labor so often in fields where disappointments are the only fruits I gather that your sympathy and cooperation are especially precious to me. With kindest greetings in which Mrs. Macy and Miss Thompson join me, I am sincerely yours, Helen Keller."

Chall: How fine. Now, how did it happen that she was at the Temple?

Rinder: She was invited to speak. She spoke at the Temple and she was presented with a large sum of money for her work. She did a great deal of work with the blind. In her letter, she thanks Rabbi Newman for this contribution. She was very grateful because she said on many occasions when she made appeals, there hadn't been the response that she found here.

Chall: And she was invited to do this. Did she speak from the pulpit?

Rinder: Yes, from the pulpit on a Saturday morning. After the service, in my husband's study, she put her fingers on his neck and held them there while he sang the Shema for her. And that's how she hears--the vibrations.

Chall: It must have been a thrilling experience for both of them.

Rinder: Yes, yes, it was.

Chagall Windows For Temple Emanu-El

Chall: I had a question about the correspondence with Chagall. You told me about it, but I haven't seen it. Apparently your husband thought it would be nice to have some Chagall windows in the Temple here.

Rinder: Yes, he had run out of musicians. [Laughter] He was sitting in the Temple one day, on the pulpit; even though he had presumably retired from his position, he would still participate in the service. So he sat up on the pulpit, looking around, and he noted that the two windows on either side, which originally had been amber-colored and the light coming through had been sunny and warm, had faded and didn't look as attractive as they should. And the thought occurred to him, wouldn't it be wonderful if Chagall did some windows for us. After all, there was nothing in the western part of the United States by Chagall. The Opera House in New York City has a Chagall mural.

So he was thinking how wonderful it would be if Chagall did some windows for us. He came home and told me about it. He was greatly excited and I was too. I thought, wouldn't that be something! I said, "Whom shall we contact?" We thought of Mrs. Walter Haas, who is a patron of the arts and one of the Jewish leaders in the community--Jewish and non-Jewish, as a matter of fact.

Rob spoke to her and she was very much interested. But she didn't want to get involved herself with the business and technical end of it. So she turned it over to her son-in-law, Mr. Richard Goldman. He was fired with the idea too, immediately. He investigated and began to communicate with the powers that be.

Finally they got to Mrs. Chagall through friends and through people who knew them in New York. Chagall was then working on the panels for the Opera House. He was seventy-seven years old and he wasn't well. And we learned that not only wasn't he well, but he had so many commissions ahead, he didn't see how it was possible to take on another.

Mrs. Haas and Madeline Haas Russell were willing to pay the fare

Rinder: for Chagall and his wife to come out here and look at the windows and see what could be done. But they couldn't even undertake that trip because they felt that if they did, he might be tempted to do something and he really wasn't in physical condition to do it. So, for the time being, the thing had to be dropped.

Possibly, if Chagall doesn't, somebody else--a great stained-glass artist--may be able to do it. Because of this form of architecture, which is Moorish-Byzantine, we can't very well have stained glass windows that the Gothic churches have, naturally. It has to be something entirely different. It would have to be a more modern kind of artist who would do these windows. Possibly at some future date these windows may be changed.

The Altar Cloth

Rinder: As it is, the Temple inside is pretty stark. There's no color there, except some color on the pulpit, which we have imposed. The seats on the pulpit are crimson velvet. We once had a very beautiful altar cloth that had been brought over from Europe. It looked as if possibly it had come from some medieval church. It was of crimson velvet embossed in gilt, scrollwork at the bottom, and long deep fringes. It completely covered the pulpit. It was magnificent. About six months ago, this cloth was stolen.

Chall: Really!

Rinder: It was never traced and we never found it, of course. In the meantime, there is nothing on the pulpit. Fortunately, it happens to be of a beautiful carrara marble and is handsome as it stands. But the cloth certainly enhanced the entire pulpit. It was simply magnificent.

Chall: How long had it been on the pulpit?

Rinder: Oh, for many years, twenty-five years possibly.

Chall: How had it been acquired, do you know?

Rinder: Some decorator had found it and brought it to our attention. Mr. Zellerbach and Mrs. Meyer, the widow of Rabbi Martin Meyer, both wanted to present it to the Temple. He, being a gentleman, deferred to the lady, and she purchased it for the Temple.

Chall: That's interesting. You wouldn't think that a thing of that kind

Chall: could just disappear.

Rinder: Well, it did. They locked the door after the horse was stolen. During the week, people go in and out and occasionally there's a visitor in town and he wanders in and looks at the Temple. It's known throughout the country as being one of the finest Temples in the country. It's very beautiful. So that's it. And that's the end of the story about the Chagall windows.

VI TWO VISITS TO ISRAEL: 1953, 1962

Taping Liturgical Music

Chall: Today I want to talk about the trips to Israel. The first one was in 1953, when, as I understand it, you did a considerable amount of taping of liturgical music.

Rinder: From various countries. You see, there were congregated at this time, people from forty-five or fifty countries--from all parts of the world. While there is a certain similarity, there is also a sufficient difference of melody of these prayers from the different areas of the world, and it was really very interesting.

The Israeli Symphony of the Air, conducted by Marc Lavry, had many of these already taped which my husband was able to procure. That's how we first met Marc Lavry, as a matter of fact. Because my husband, when he came, contacted him and told him what he planned to do.

Lavry was instrumental in getting him some of the things that he had, and in contacting people in the community who might be helpful. So they went about with a recorder to see some of these people. If there was no electricity, they were asked to come to a place where it was available. You needed electricity for the recorder, and this was early in 1953 when the State was quite new. Some of the homes had no electric outlets. Nevertheless, Rob was able to get innumerable versions of certain chants for the Holidays and it's astonishing how they vary and how interesting they are.

Chall: Were these singers primarily cantors?

Rinder: No, they were just lay people, most of them. In Orthodox services (and most of the people were Orthodox, of course), they chant along with the cantor. Every layman knows the service. In fact, they automatically chant the service rather than read it, so that whether they had a singing voice or not, they knew the chant.

Chall: I see. Did you get the eastern, the African, as well as the European?

Rinder: Oh yes, indeed, the Arabic, the Yemen and the Bukharin. I remember seeing them in their robes as they walked down the street. Of course, they've become assimilated and when we went again in '62, you rarely ever saw these flowing robes on the Yemenites, except for the Arabs who still wear them. It was really a fascinating thing to see the different costumes and headgear. You don't see them any more.

At that time, they still spoke their native tongue. Of course, the interviews had to be translated back and forth. Rob got a great many chants and melodies, for instance, prayers from the Passover service, the Sabbath service, the High Holy Days service.

Chall: Specifically what your husband was interested in?

Rinder: Yes, to preserve these chants for posterity. He was afraid, as everybody was, that these things would disappear, which they certainly will. Of course, at the moment, I don't know quite what to do with these tapes. I have them here and eventually I'll find a place for them.

Chall: Was anything done with them? Have they been heard by musicians any place at all?

Rinder: Rob had an evening at the Temple once for the Men's Club, I think, where he played a number of them but not to any great extent. They really should be edited. After he got them, he was very busy and he didn't have an opportunity. He got older, of course, and then he was busy with his book, Music and Prayer. This was a different type thing than he was accustomed to doing and he never got around to it. All I know is that we have the recordings.

Chall: The complete set of what you have is not in Israel?

Rinder: They may have some. Hebrew Union College would be interested in this. Then of course, we have recordings of all the commissioned services that were given at the Temple. We have a very fine recording set-up there, right close to the pulpit, a recording machine. It's quite a large, fine one that takes down everything and tapes them beautifully.

Chall: Where are those?

Rinder: Here. That's my private property. There are probably similar recordings in the Temple.

Chall: To get back to Israel, I understand that in Jerusalem there's a street where each particular congregation of immigrants has its own service. Did you go along there?

Rinder: Oh yes. That's called the Mea Shearim. It's a quarter where the ultra-Orthodox Jews live, who still wear the payess and the shtreimel and the long garments, and they look as antiquated as if they had just stepped out of the Middle Ages. It is astonishing; even the little boys wear the payess. They use private homes, just a room upstairs, as a synagogue. It's fascinating. Regular tours are held; you go from one to another. Each one is different. There you hear the various melodies too.

Chall: Did you do that?

Rinder: We did that one Friday afternoon, yes.

Chall: Of course, you wouldn't have taped; they wouldn't have allowed you to tape.

Rinder: Oh no, no, no, that we couldn't do. Most tourists take that tour. We went with Dr. Frankel, who was a mathematics professor at the Hebrew University, as our guide. He was out here once, we met him and entertained him. When we went to Israel, we contacted him so he invited us to dinner that Friday night. But we went on the tour first and then had dinner afterwards.

Chall: What other highlights of the trip can you recall?

Rinder: My husband wrote back articles which I didn't think you'd want.

Chall: There are a couple of them in your folders. There's a letter from Jerusalem; there's one about David.

Rinder: Rob wrote some articles which the Jewish Bulletin printed.

Chall: I saw one copy of that.

Rinder: I have two which you may use here. We were fascinated by everything we saw during our first visit.

Elath

Rinder: The second time, we flew down to Elath, where the Gulf of Aqaba is, and we were delighted to see what was going on. There was a charming hotel where we had lunch. I don't think it was air-conditioned, but we were fortunate that there was a delightful breeze that day. We flew down in what looked like a little crate.

Rinder: It was just like stepping into a taxi, it was as informal as that. It had just arrived, we got on, and off we went. I said to my husband, "Do you think we'll ever get there?" It just didn't seem possible. And you fly over this barren land which looks like pictures of the surface of the moon. I think it takes about three-quarters of an hour.

You get there and there's this little town, Elath, built up. There were even flowers planted in front of some of the places; though it's right by the sea, water is scarce. There's a wonderful aquarium there, with fish which you don't see anywhere else. It was fascinating. It's probably much larger and finer at this point. Then, it was just makeshift but it was most interesting.

My husband's niece and family, who live there now, had driven there the day before. They spent the night sleeping in sleeping bags on the beach, which they thought was fun. They were there when we arrived and we all had lunch at the hotel and spent the day together. We went out on the glass-bottomed boats and saw the coral and the fish. The coral beds all along the coast there are simply fascinating. And there were strange fish, some of which we found in the aquarium. We flew back in time for dinner. It had been a wonderful day.

Jerusalem

Rinder: We adored the Hebrew University. The grounds are so beautiful. The campus had been laid out in a floral pattern. The landscaping had been done by Lawrence Halprin, Rose Halprin's son, who lives in Kentfield. He's a landscape architect. The buildings are handsome and blend in with the landscape. They're on an elevation and the hills are all around.

Then we went to the Hadassah Hospital. I felt like the cartoon I once saw of a mother with a little girl standing at a window looking at a picture of this hospital, and the mother says to the child, "See darling, mommy built this." And that's how I felt: I built that. I really felt so because I had started Hadassah here. On two different occasions, I organized it. So that was doubly interesting to me. We took a tour through it and saw everything there was to be seen.

Then we went down to see the Chagall windows. They had been

Rinder: installed in the synagogue but to our dismay, we found that they had been boarded up. You see, to get into this synagogue, you go down a few steps. Consequently, the windows are almost on a level with the sidewalks, so that any child, or an enemy Arab, can go by and throw a rock or something. Because of this, they boarded up the windows and the place was not open to tourists. We were terribly disappointed. I understand they're no longer boarded up. They now protect them with shatter-proof glass.

During the '67 war, one of the windows was broken and Chagall said he would mend it or make another at his own expense. I think, originally, they were his gift to Israel. I know his painting at the Opera House in Paris was his gift to Paris because he had learned his art there. He was born in Russia, you know.

Chall: How long did you stay either time?

Rinder: The first time we stayed in Israel two months. While my husband was attending to his musical interests, I was walking the streets of Jerusalem having a wonderful time, really getting to know the city. We met many of the important people there. We went to the Lavry home a number of times, where we met the musicians and artists of the community. He had a beautiful home. Many of the people lived in some of the homes evacuated by the Arabs and they were wonderfully built.

They were built of golden-colored stone. There'a a law in Jerusalem where you can only build with the rocks of the surrounding territory. They're a gold shade and usually fairly large. They insulate the home; they're thick and heavy. They're marvelous for that climate. And the floors are usually of marble or stone, so that the homes are cool and high-ceilinged. They're large rooms, really handsome homes.

And the Lavrys lived in one of those. You entered through a lovely garden. I don't know how he managed to do it because pay in Israel is very low, to such an extent that Mrs. Lavry too had to hold down a job in order for them to live comfortably--to live at all, to have enough to eat; they have three children. We also met some of the professors at the University.

The second time we went, we stayed only one month, but even that's much longer than most tourists stay. So we know Israel pretty well.

Chall: The first time you were on a working tour and the second time on a tourists' tour.

Safad

Rinder: Yes, we combined both, yes. We went to Haifa, we went to Acre, we went to Safad--that's the most fascinating place in all the world. It's quaint, it's antiquated, it's the oldest city there next to Jerusalem. It's where some of the scribes of centuries ago used to live. The streets are merely stairways leading down between rows of houses, up and down and here and there. Many of the artists have taken over the houses and have painted them a lovely blue or pink or white and use them as their studios. Some of them live there. That was fascinating, going from one artist's home to another.

There are some fairly modern hotels up there and we spent the night in one of them. That was very interesting. This was high up with all the countryside below and the Sea of Galilee in the distance. It was very unique and wonderful.

Passover at Lake Tiberias

Rinder: From there, we went on down to Tiberias, which is on the lake. We got there erev Passover and shortly after we arrived, there was a knock on the door and the manager wanted to know whether my husband would conduct the seder service that night. He said, "Yes, I'd be delighted." She told us that it would start at six-thirty.

We got dressed and we were ready to go. We thought since this is a Jewish hotel, perhaps they live by Jewish time as they do in America. My husband was going over the Hagaddah, reacquainting himself with the Sephardic pronunciation, which is different from the Ashkenazic, which he was accustomed to. Then about five minutes after six-thirty, there's a knock on the door and somebody says, "Cantor Rinder, we are waiting for you."

We hurried down and every man, woman and child was in his place and at the head of the table was Ben-Gurion. His wife was there and flanking them were members of his cabinet. All of this we hadn't expected. So it was really an embarrassing moment for us to be the last and the latest. We hurried up to our place, which was right close to this head table.

Meeting Ben-Gurion

Rinder: My husband proceeded to give the service. The Four Questions were asked. And do you know who answered them? Ben-Gurion! Because they weren't the usual type questions. Some child had been instructed to ask and Ben-Gurion answered. I forget now after all these years just what they were, but they were things pertaining to modern Israeli life, rather than the ancient questions.

We stayed at this hotel, the Gallei Kennereth, for the entire week of Passover and met Ben-Gurion at all meals. You see, this is the resort that most of the Israelis go to. It really had been a difficult thing to get into the place. We happened to know the mayor of Tel Aviv, who had been to San Francisco. Through him, we were able to get a reservation there; I think we were the only tourists. Otherwise it was filled with Israelis. There's no school that week and the families come with their children.

This hotel is built right over the lake. There was even a eucalyptus tree growing out of the deck. It had been left to grow and there it was as we sat there looking out over the lake. You realize that the Golan Heights are right above. They could have taken a potshot at us.

One of the evenings during this week we took a boat ride to a kibbutz which was across the lake, right under the Golan Heights. Do you know what was presented that night? A little operetta by the English composer [Benjamin Britten], done in Hebrew. Ben-Gurion and many of the others were there too, sitting right in front of us. There we all were.

That's the beauty of Israel. Everybody is informal, just as we hear that in the army they don't salute officers, some of whom they even call by their first names. But look at the kind of fighters they are when the need arises. That evening was one of the highlights of our visit. This was the first time we were in Israel.

Chall: What Hagaddah did your husband use?

Rinder: They had their own Hagaddah. They didn't have the Hebrew Union College one.

Chall: [Laughter] So it took a little preparation, but he knew all the chants.

Rinder: He knew them, of course. As a matter of fact, he was raised in an Orthodox home so it was nothing new to him.

Chall: Were they pleased?

Rinder: Oh certainly. Imagine, they had a chazzan conduct their service.

Chall: Did you get a chance to know Ben-Gurion?

Rinder: Oh yes. He's really rather a shy person. He kept very much to himself. He had a guard outside his door all night, twenty-four hours around. Our room was right opposite so we felt very safe. [Laughter] Every time I left, there was this guard standing at attention with his gun at his side. There was a chair there too; he could sit down occasionally.

Chall: I didn't realize that he needed to be guarded.

Rinder: He did. He was the premier then.

Chall: And Mrs. Ben-Gurion, did you get to know her?

Rinder: Oh, she was a character. She came up to my husband once and said to him, "Cantor Rinder, tell me, are you really religious?" [Laughter] She was a malaprop in one sense and a character. She was an easy-going woman of the people. They all are actually; they've risen through the ranks.

There was a beautiful walk along the lake, lined with trees and wild flowers, where Ben-Gurion walked frequently, as we did. Our room did not look onto the lake, it was opposite. But it looked onto a hillside opposite the hotel, which was banked with red poppies. There the poppies are red. It took your breath away to see miles of hillside banked with red poppies.

We walked along for about a mile or two by the side of the lake every morning after breakfast and then came back and sat on that deck and read the morning paper, the Jerusalem Post, in English. It was a lovely place to be at that time. This was April. This spot is below sea level, consequently it was very warm. I can imagine how hot it gets later, even though Mount Hermon in the distance is snow-covered.

Chall: Dr. Lowdermilk calls Mount Hermon and the lake below it a physiographic gem.

Rinder: Yes, oh undoubtedly. You can imagine, this is below sea level and there is this snow-covered mountain. I don't know how long it remains snow-covered, possibly all year round, some of it. Perfectly beautiful. We saw that lake and we saw Mount Hermon from the hotel at Safad where we stayed.

Paul Ben-Haim

Chall: Did you meet Ben-Haim the first trip or the second trip?

Rinder: The second trip. The first trip, as you know, my husband commissioned Mr. Lavry to write the Service, which he promised to do. The second trip, it was Ben-Haim, who was a delightful, charming gentleman. He came to the hotel to see us a number of times. Between them, they decided on certain psalms which he was to set to music. Of course, after my husband returned to San Francisco there was correspondence back and forth with regard to it.

Pride in Israel

Chall: Tell me one thing: after being an ardent Zionist from the days of grammar schools and holding down the Zionist cause in San Francisco--against odds occasionally--how did it feel, in 1953, when you finally landed on the soil of Israel?

Rinder: Well, as I say, I thought it belonged to me, that I had built it. [Laughter]

Chall: Not only the hospital, the whole thing? [Laughter]

Rinder: Yes. If it weren't for all the Zionists throughout the world, nobody might ever have gone there. Also, the original migration from Russia. I don't know if they were Zionists then--whatever you call them--they wanted to go back to the land. Do you know the history? From Russia, groups of young people went to Palestine where they really had a hard time.

Chall: Yes, they died of malaria.

Rinder: Malaria and various other diseases. Eventually, Hadassah went in and began to clean up the place, sent doctors and nurses who made it possible for the pioneers to live there. That was the beginning. Without Hadassah they might never have been able to continue, so we think.

Every organization helped, I'm sure. O.R.T. helped. We saw many of the institutions established by O.R.T. where young people were learning arts and crafts and working.

Rinder: Of course, we went to numerous kibbutzim. We saw the Youth Aliyah children in various places, all being taken care of beautifully, looking well, fairly happy--as happy as those poor children could be who had come from unhappy Europe in those days.

There's the difference, and that's what Golda Meir said on the air the other day, the difference between our immigrants--we had more immigrants in our country than the Arabs had from Israel--from Palestine--who fled during the 1948 war. But we took care of ours, we saw that they had work, we saw that they had homes. We saw that the children had schools to go to and they became self-sufficient after a few years and self-supporting and helped build up the country. Whereas the Arabs did nothing. They just kept their refugees as political pawns.

Chall: It seems so obvious to us. Any other ideas on the trip to Israel?

Rinder: Not really, except that we felt justified in our lifetime of interest in the cause, although we had never in our wildest dreams, when we started, expected to see results in our lifetime. There had been Zionists throughout the centuries virtually, people who had dreamed of a homeland. In fact, we prayed in our Hagaddahs for centuries, "next year in Jerusalem." We thought it would just be another millennium possibly, but somehow strange things happen in this life and it did materialize in our lifetime. We were very grateful that we had lived to see it.

VII CANTOR RINDER: ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO HIS PHILOSOPHY AND ACTIVITIES

Views on Intermarriage

Rinder: I don't know if you'd be interested in his attitude toward intermarriage. and where he stood on it. You see, up to recently, no rabbi would perform an intermarriage unless there had been conversion. But my husband had found through the years that we lost more than we gained; when we refused to perform an intermarriage. the couple would go off, be married perhaps by a Christian minister or a justice of the peace, and we would never see them again, nor their children. And we would actually lose the whole family.

When such a couple came to him to be married, he would talk to them very seriously, pointing out how important it was for both to be of the same religion, either Jewish or Christian, how much better that would be for the children, less friction later on in life. And almost invariably they would see the point and as a rule, the non-Jewish partner would decide to study and be converted. However, if there were no conversion, but the couple promised to raise the children in the Jewish faith, he would perform the ceremony.

So there were some very interesting things that would occur, you know, at times like that. There was one time when a father came to my husband and told him that he had lost one son because he had refused to give his permission for him to marry a Christian girl. They'd left; he'd never even seen either of them again. Now he has two children left, a son and a daughter, both of whom are in love with a Christian boy and girl. And what was he to do? He said he didn't want the same thing to happen. So Rob said, "Let them come to see me, each couple separately, and we shall see what we can do."

Well, as it happened, they both were willing, both the man who was Christian and the young woman who was Christian, to convert to Judaism. And so he taught them. They read a number of books and then the ceremony of conversion was performed, and there was a double wedding of the two couples in the chapel. That was very gratifying and a wonderful solution to the problem.

Rinder: There was another instance which wasn't quite like this. The daughter of a rabbi in this community married a non-Jew who was a widower and had a little girl seven years old. And they went off to live in a little midwestern town where the man came from. About six months after the marriage, my husband received a letter from the woman saying that she was quite unhappy, that there were no other Jews in the little community, and that she wasn't being accepted. She was not making friends, and what shall she do? Well, he wrote back saying not to worry about it, that she was a wonderful person, and just to be herself and try her best, and he was sure that in time they will recognize her worth and the type person she is, and that she will be befriended.

Well, years passed, and to show how right he was, when the little girl was almost eighteen, she wrote him a letter saying that Mother (as she called her) had been so wonderful to her that in deference to her, and in her honor, she would like to become a Jewess. What shall she do? How shall she go about it?

So he wrote telling her what she would have to do. He sent her books to read and suggested that when she was through, to come here if there was no rabbi in their vicinity, and that he would perform the conversion ceremony. So she came here with her parents. Her aunt, Mrs. Sol Kahn, lived here at the time and she came too, and some friends and relatives, and the service was held here in our home. That was truly a very moving and touching thing, as you can imagine.

When Welcome's family returned home the next day, to their little town, every resident was there to greet them at the house, having brought gifts and flowers and cakes, and there was a splendid reception for this young girl who had become a Jewess! It showed how much they had learned to love and admire the mother and to respect her.

Chall: Yes. That's interesting. You don't want to tell me who this woman was?

Rinder: Well, it was Rabbi M. S. Levy's daughter, named Welcome. He was the rabbi of Beth Israel, a Conservative rabbi.

Chall: It must have been a shock to the rabbi. He wasn't alive when this girl came back?

Rinder: No. When his daughter married, he was alive. but not when the granddaughter returned because if the child was seven years old and came back at eighteen, that was eleven years later.

Chall: Are there any other examples?

Rinder: Time and again these girls would come here to the house when they were studying for their conversion--it was usually girls marrying Jewish boys, interestingly enough. They would come here once a week to go over their lesson. You know, they would study for a number of months before the conversion.

Chall: Why would they come to the house?

Rinder: Well, most of them were busy, they were working, and it would be after five or so that they could come here, between five and six, for instance. The Temple was usually closed by then, and my husband thought it was wiser and safer to meet them here than in the empty Temple where his study was. So they came here and frequently I invited them to stay for dinner and I got to know them. They were lovely girls, and they all seemed very happy to be studying for their conversion. It was all very interesting.

Chall: They took their places in the Jewish community.

Temple Tour Guide

Rinder: Many of them did, oh yes, become more Jewish than the Jews. So you see, my husband participated in that phase of the congregational life because the rabbi seemed too busy to pay much attention, and my husband found time to do it. I don't know how he did.

Now, there's another thing. There were people coming in to see the Temple constantly--strangers, tourists, who wanted to visit and tour the Temple. After all, it is a landmark in the community. He'd be told that tomorrow, a certain group is coming, and he'd be on hand to show them around.

Well, recently, oh, about three years ago, it was decided that the Temple Guild women should take over this function because the present rabbis found it too difficult and too time-consuming. None of them seemed to have time. Now there are twenty-five women and they aren't enough. So they're getting ten more to do what my poor husband did in those days single-handed. He was busy constantly showing visitors around, and he loved doing it, and he enjoyed it. It never occurred to him not to do it, nor to say, "Somebody else better take over." Isn't this interesting?

Chall: That is interesting. [Laughter] Well, he was willing to give a great deal of time.

1338 Union Street
San Francisco, Calif.
January 30, 1956

Dear Reverend Rinder,

Our sincere thanks to you for the wonderful afternoon we spent at Temple Emanu-El yesterday. You answered all our questions so very well and gave us a great appreciation for your faith. The history of the Jewish people is quite inspiring and we are grateful to you for telling us about it in such an interesting way.

I am finding it difficult to say just how much we gained by meeting you and getting acquainted with Temple Emanu-El. But thank you again for donating your afternoon to us.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Ferdinand R. Hassler
First Christian Church

Rinder: Oh yes, he gave of himself completely. It wasn't a job for him; it was a way of life, a dedication really, his Temple.

Chall: And he was active in all facets, not just the music.

Rinder: Completely, yes. There was nothing went on that he didn't have a hand in.

Devotion to the Temple

Chall: Rabbi Fine told me that your husband was devoted to the Temple. Often he would ask the rabbi to come into the courtyard and look up at the sky. He always insisted that the sky was bluer over the dome than elsewhere. Rabbi Fine said that after a time he too began to believe that the sky was actually bluer over the dome.

Rinder: Yes. Anything pertaining to the Temple and any member of the Temple was important in his life because they were members. They were his family. I told you when my daughter was being married, he talked about inviting his most intimate friends--about one thousand. [Laughter] And truly they were. He considered every one of the members as his intimate friends. And they all felt that way towards him. He was really an unusual type of person. I didn't realize it at the time, how much the people loved him. But after reading all these letters and articles--after all, one thousand people can't be wrong. [Laughter] They all said the same thing: I was convinced that he had been appreciated.

We had some that didn't feel so kindly, which was all to the good. I think no man should have only friends; you're too much of a yes man if you do that, you know. I was rather proud of the kinds of people who were against him as a matter of fact.

Chall: Who were they?

Rinder: Well, I won't tell you. [Laughter] One is gone--it was a she.

Chall: Not Mrs. Sloss?

Rinder: No, no. She was a very dear friend. Because that would have been fatal. Had it been she, he couldn't have remained. She was that influential. She attended services regularly and she was a very important person in the community so thank God, we were very good friends, in spite of the fact that she was not a Zionist. But she was president of Hadassah once, as I told you.

Pastoral Duties

Chall: I understand that some people would ask especially to have Cantor Rinder marry them, particularly if they had been confirmed by him.

Rinder: Oh yes. It was really very embarrassing because most of the requests came in for him, but even more for the funerals, because at a time like that people want somebody who's sympathetic and who knows the family. And since rabbis had come and gone and didn't know the congregants as well as my husband did, it was almost natural, especially the latter ten or fifteen years, to ask for him.

You see, in the course of over fifty years of service, he got to know the children, the grandchildren, the grandparents, and so when a death occurred in a family, their first thought was Cantor Rinder. I remember one man calling up one day when Rob was already quite ill. He said his father had passed away and he wanted my husband to officiate. I said I was very sorry, my husband was very ill, and I was sure he just couldn't ever make it. So he said, "Oh my God, what are we going to do?" That was his reaction, as though . . . . I said, "Oh well, there are two rabbis at the Temple now, and a new cantor, and I'm sure that they'll be willing to help out." He said, "Oh, it won't be the same."

Chall: No. They won't know the family.

Rinder: No. For instance, when somebody would call up and say, "Cantor Rinder, my mother (or my father) passed away," even my heart would ache to hear how he would talk to them. "Oh," he'd say, "what happened? Was she very ill?" He'd be interested. He'd want to know what had happened, not just say, "Yes. When will it be? When did it happen?" And invariably he would pay a condolence call immediately, because he felt this was when the family needed him most. They wanted to talk about it. And people always did.

I frequently went with him because I did his chauffering, and they would go into great detail telling how ill the deceased had been and what had happened. And it was consoling for them to have somebody to talk to. I remember many a time he'd get up out of a sick bed to pay these condolence calls because he felt that was the important time to go--before the funeral service was held.

I came across a number of things he used when he officiated at funeral services. This one might have been written for him, which he used for somebody, I don't know who. This one was Rabbi Martin Meyer's favorite poem, which Rob read because he requested that it be read at his funeral. I think that would be rather interesting.

A Poem Without Title

We know not what is is, friends, this sleep so deep and still,
The folded hands, the awful calm, the cheek so pale and still,
The lids that will not lift again though we may call and call,
The strange white solitude of peace that settles over all.

We know not what it means, friends, this desolate heart pain,
This dread to take our daily way and walk in it again;
We know not to what other sphere the loved who leave us, go,
Nor why we're left to wonder still, nor why we do not know.

But this we know, our loved and dead, if they should come this day,
Should come and ask us, "what is life," not one of us would say,
Life is a mystery as deep as ever death can be;
Yet oh! how sweet it is to us, this life we live and see!

Then might they say - these vanished ones - and blessed is the thought!
"So death is sweet to us beloved, though we may tell ye naught.
We may not tell it to the quick, the mystery of death-
Ye may not tell us if ye would, the mystery of Breath."

The child who enters life comes not with knowledge or intent;
So those who enter death must go as little children sent,
Nothing is known. But I believe that God is overhead,
And as life is to the living, so death is to the dead.

Rabbi Martin A. Meyer's favorite poem, which he requested to be read at his funeral. Read by Cantor R.R. Rinder.

Rinder: In those days, almost every funeral service ended with a poem, for instance, Browning's "The Crossing of the Bar." There are some beautiful poems appropriate for such occasions.

Chall: What part did your husband play in the bar mitzvahs?

Rinder: Oh, throughout his entire association with the Temple, he trained the bar mitzvahs. He took them in hand only two or three months before their bar mitzvah. He went over the various lessons they were supposed to have learned throughout the years, gave them examinations at the end of the period and also taught them the broches (the prayers) in Hebrew.

Chall: Did he enjoy it?

Rinder: Yes, he loved it. He loved the contact and he made lifelong friends of these children, so much so that almost every one of them, when they got married, asked for him, and were devoted to him. He had a very sympathetic way with them and he enjoyed being with them. He was enthusiastic and he made the things meaningful to them, so that they really had a wonderful time.

The thing has changed considerably now. I think they have a two year period now. They learn more Hebrew now, so that they can read it from the Torah. Well, in two years they should. But they're not in contact with the cantor, nor the rabbi, very much. There's somebody in the Sunday School who has charge of that. And many of the youngsters chant the blessings, the broches. And you know how they learn them? They're given a record, a recording of it, and they take it home and learn it that way. So there isn't the personal association and contact to the same extent that there was in the old days.

Chall: It must have taken quite a bit of time.

Rinder: Yes. He had definite times in the week; there were several days a week after school hours that he devoted just to that, depending upon how many boys he had going. There were always two or three or four. There weren't classes, he had just a few.

Chall: Where would he work with them, up in his study?

Rinder: In his study, yes.

Cantor Rinder's Personality

Chall: What kind of personality did your husband have which would make people want to come to him, not only for weddings and funerals and all the rest, but take his advice even about conversion, whereas they really might not have taken it from somebody else? It must have been some special quality.

Rinder: Yes. I think Rabbi Newman will tell you more about this. He can do this better than I can, of course. You would think I'd be prejudiced, as I would be, of course.

Chall: Well, you might have your own point of view.

Rinder: He was a very loving kind of person who loved people, very outgoing. He was the true extrovert, but in a nice sense, you know, pleasant. He was very sympathetic and very understanding, and he loved human beings.

Chall: You might be interested in what Mr. Altman told me: no matter how you felt when you went in to see Cantor Rinder, you always felt much better when you left.

Rinder: Is that what he said?

Chall: Yes.

Rinder: He was a very optimistic kind of person and a wonderful spirit. He'd get up in the morning gay, singing; I mean, he was happy even before he had his coffee and he never drank coffee anyway. Most people have to have their coffee before they can face the world. And he faced the world with . . . well, he was a very happy human being. Fortunately, he happened to be doing the kind of work that was just suited to him, you know, as though the cantorship had been created for him. But you see, for him it wasn't only a cantorship. It was the total thing that he encompassed; everything pertaining to the Temple was his and he was interested in it.

He was really active as a minister for the community. I remember one friend who was the head of the Residence Club--the Emanu-El Sisterhood, at the time--got another job down in Los Angeles. When she arrived there, she asked, "Who is the Cantor Rinder down here?" [Laughter] When she wanted something, she would call on him. If she needed a speaker, a singer, a musician, why, he was called on.

Chall: Did he keep you informed about what he was doing during the day and how he felt about things and his relationships with others?

Rinder: Oh yes, we always discussed everything. If he would have a project or an idea in his head and wanted to say something or do something, he would mull over it for days and days and look on all sides of it: Was it the right thing to do? Was it not? Was it timely? Was it relevant? Before he would finally decide upon certain things. If I think of something suddenly, ha, this is what I shall do. Then I sit back and regret it for the rest of my days. [Laughter] But he never did that. He had very little cause for regret for any of his actions because he thought them out so thoroughly.

Chall: Did he ask your advice and did you help him mull it over?

Rinder: As I say, I was more impetuous and I would say, "Oh, why don't you?" or "Why don't you not?" But he would proceed to follow through and think about it more thoroughly and then act as he thought right.

Chall: He was careful. That's a good balance.

Rinder: When you're in a public position, as he was, I think it was the right thing to do.

Chall: That's probably why he stayed some fifty years.

The Spirit of Youth

Chall: Marshall Kuhn, and all those with whom I've spoken--I think without any doubt, all of them--remarked that the two of you remained somehow always so young in spirit that young people were always eager to have you at their parties and they always marvel at this. There was no generation gap. They wonder how it happened. [Laughter]

Rinder: That was true of him.

Chall: Well, they say it's true of both of you.

Rinder: I just went along for the ride. [Laughter] In fact, I did the driving. Possibly by osmosis; it rubs off you know. Being with somebody for so long you take on the characteristics, sometimes almost the looks, of the person with whom you live together so long.

Chall: But he was interested in everything, which kept him young, and he was interested in young people and their development.

Rinder: Yes, and our contacts were with the young--the bar mitzvahs and the marrying young people. Occasionally, we'd be invited to a Golden Wedding Anniversary where people our age were. I'd look around and I'd say, "My God, what a lot of old people. What am I doing here?" [Laughter] I was most unhappy because I wasn't used to it. I was accustomed to being around the young. To this day, I go with the daughters of people who are my age. For instance, one of my friends is much younger than I. Her mother is here now living with her, and her mother may even be younger than I. To me, she's an old, old woman.

Chall: It's the point of view more than age.

Rinder: No doubt, yes. Some of us have a keener interest in things that are going on, I don't know what it is. It's physical, too. I feel as well or better than when I was young and had my children to care for because I was tired a great deal and had to have my rest every afternoon. But now I don't even have to have my rest.

Chall: You're still young and peppy.

Sometimes Absent-minded

Rinder: Here's a good story. My husband was asked to speak at the Florence Crittenden Home, which is a home for unwed mothers. He was due there at about seven-thirty in the evening. That home is located in one of these very dark dreary neighborhoods. I drove him there and it was when some of the buildings in the Western Addition had first been pulled down--they're rebuilding that part. The home was standing there isolated, with no other buildings near. I warned him to be sure and take a taxi home.

I left him at the door at about seven-thirty, and at about nine-thirty I began wondering when he was coming back. Then it was ten and ten-thirty. Well, at ten forty-five, I phoned the home. I said, "By any chance, is Cantor Rinder there?" I'm afraid I had awakened everybody. "Oh no, he left hours ago." So I really was concerned.

I was just about to call the police. Just then, he walked in. He had taken a taxi and in passing the Temple which was all lighted up, he recalled that the Men's Club was meeting and the topic was planned parenthood. [Laughter] So he got out and went to the meeting, forgetting that I was here waiting for his return. [Laughter]

Chall: That's very good. I understand he used to keep you waiting frequently, just forgetting all about you. Everyone comments about his absent-minded traits. Still, Mr. Altman claims that he had an incredible memory when it came to music and that his work on the pulpit was flawless, that he never missed a cue.

Practical

Chall: I have been told that you were the practical member of the family. Is this so?

Rinder: Well, in some respects. He was quite remarkable because though he wasn't a businessman, yet he was able to take care of our finances in such a way that even though our income was a very modest one, he could leave me fairly comfortably off.

Receiving the Honorary Degree

Chall: He received a Master of Arts degree from the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, on October 12, 1962.

Rinder: This is a branch of the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati.

Chall: You received notice of this from Rabbi Fine while you were in Israel, in a letter saying, "I do not want to clutter your pure enjoyment of Israel by sending you mail. However, I believe the enclosed letter from Nelson Glueck addressed to you is of unusual importance and that you would want to have it as soon as possible."

Rinder: We were really quite pleased and delighted. But we didn't know how pleased we would be until we finally attended the service at which he was to be presented with this honor. We went down to Los Angeles thinking it would be a very simple service and only one or two people would be present. But we were pleased to find the Temple crowded with many old friends who had moved down from here: young people whom my husband had confirmed or married, or young men who had been bar mitzvahed in our Temple and whom he had taught. They had subsequently married and had gone down to Los Angeles to live. When they read of this thing in the papers, they attended the service.

Rinder: There was a processional of some very important personages present, as you will see in this little program. We found that the entire service was really centered around my husband. I thought it would be a class receiving honors, but he was the only one. Rabbi Magnin [Edgar F.] was the guest speaker. We have known him all our lives, for he was born in San Francisco and we had met when we came here fifty years ago. There were several other speakers. It was really a very moving ceremony and very thrilling and we were delighted with it.

Chall: Yes. It was a high point of his career.

Rinder: Yes, undoubtedly.

VIII MRS. RINDER: CIVIC AND FAMILY LIFE

Chall: I know you were making lunches for your husband--when he could remember to come across the street and have lunch--and chauffering him around, and raising two children. Nevertheless, I've been told that you had your own life. You were very busy. I think it's Mr. Altman who said he couldn't decide which one of you was the more brilliant, you were both brilliant. And other people have said somewhat the same thing. Rabbi Fine feels that you brought to those organizations in which you were active, a great deal of originality in developing programs, and made them really move when you were interested.

Rinder: Did he say that?

Chall: Yes, he did. So I thought we'd talk about what you were doing in the various organizations, perhaps starting with the Zionist group and Hadassah because that's where you have had your longest interest.

Zionism and Hadassah--The Early Years

Rinder: Yes, longest and earliest interest. In fact, beginning when I was in grammar school in New York, and Rose Halpern asked me to join the "Stars of Zion." When we came to San Francisco after we were married, we both joined the Zionist organization. There was such an organization here already. Two years later in 1916, we went back East, to visit my family. I had been quite homesick. I had never been away from home before and I was very eager to get home. So we took this trip.

Before I left, the Zionist organization asked me to attend the Zionist convention which was to be held in Philadelphia. I attended. That was really an outstanding convention because Weitzmann was there, and Stephen Wise was there, and all the important figures. Louis D. Brandeis was there. They were all emerging figures at the time. I didn't realize how important they would become some day. But I do remember seeing them there. Did you ever read the book,

Rinder: They Who Knock at Our Gates?

Chall: No.

Rinder: A young woman wrote that. She had been in San Francisco shortly before I left and had spoken at our Temple. Her name was Mary Antin. She was at this convention when I got there.

I heard that Hadassah was holding its convention there too, its first convention, and I looked in on their meeting. There were just a few women seated around a table. That's all there were at the time. Also again, the outstanding personalities--they were to become later--of Hadassah were all around this table, including Henrietta Szold.

Chall: Was your friend Rose Luria in this group?

Rinder: That I don't remember. She may have been there but I don't think I saw her there at the time. I think Judith Epstein was there, and Jessie Sampter, a poetess. She went to live in Israel and has since died. She was then the poetess of Hadassah.

I took Mary Antin aside and I said, "You have just met some of our women. Do you think it would be advisable for me to start a Hadassah group in San Francisco?" She said, "Certainly. You go home and as soon as you get there, you just start one." Well, I decided to do so.

When I returned, I called a meeting at my home. At that time, Marvin Lowenthal was at the head of the Zionist organization in San Francisco. He had an office here. I asked him to speak to this group of women about Zionism and about Hadassah. Most of them couldn't have cared less. They left and many of them I never saw again at a Hadassah meeting.

Among that group was Mrs. Henry Harris, Adella Harris, who at the time was not a bit interested. But in the course of the years, both she and her husband had occasion to meet a great many of the Zionist leaders who came out here to collect funds and to talk. And they were converted finally, to such an extent that Mrs. Harris became president of Hadassah and Dr. Harris became president of the Zionist organization.

It's interesting because most of the others who were interested in Zionism at the time had European backgrounds, more or less, or were first generation. These two were second or third generation Americans, Dr. Harris having been born up in a little town in Washington, and Mrs. Harris came from Baltimore with a very reformed Jewish background. So that it was really a feather in our caps to have

Rinder: captured them. They evinced such great interest and their home became the center of a great many of the Zionist gatherings here. We were very good friends and it was a warm, friendly relationship that we all had for one another.

Organizing Hadassah

Rinder: Hadassah had a very weak beginning. It was very difficult to interest the women of San Francisco.

Chall: Of any congregation?

Rinder: Of any congregation. Of course, I worked particularly with Emanu-El members, so it was all the more difficult. Then there came to speak here Rabbi Gottheil's sister-in-law, Eva Leon, who was French and spoke at Temple Emanu-El. She told them of her interest in Palestine at the time, and of Hadassah. She said that Hadassah is merely a philanthropic organization and every Jewish woman in the country ought to belong to it. The fact that she was French appealed to the members of the congregation.

That week Miss Leon and I called on Mrs. Max Sloss, who was one of the outstanding women in the community and one of the important members of Temple Emanu-El. We asked her whether, if she were nominated at a forthcoming meeting, she would accept the presidency. She said, "Yes." We then called on Mrs. Moses Heller, who was also one of the outstanding women in the community. We asked whether she would be treasurer. And she said, "Yes." And I was to be the secretary.

We called this meeting for two in the afternoon at the St. Francis Hotel in a small room. There was such a huge attendance that we had to transfer to the ballroom. There were about 250 women present. Mrs. Sloss was elected unanimously as president of the organization. Mrs. Moses Heller was elected treasurer.

We had two years of a beautiful time. If we needed money, Mrs. Sloss came across with it. [Laughter] She was just open-handed with everything. We had wonderful meetings. We had singers and speakers whom we paid very generously, most often paid by Mrs. Sloss. I helped her with the programs.

For twenty years thereafter I had charge of programs because that was something I could do at home when my children were still young. I knew speakers in the community, I knew musicians in the community,

Object in America:
Foster Zionist Ideals
Make Zionist Propaganda

HADASSAH

THE WOMEN'S ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

Affiliated with the Federation of American Zionists

Object in Palestine:
Establish a System of
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CHAPTERS

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AMERICAN ZIONIST MEDICAL UNIT FOR PALESTINE

44 East 23d Street,
New York, September 14, 1917.

Mrs. Reuben R. Rinder,
1369 Hyde Street,
San Francisco, Calif.

My dear Mrs. Rinder:

In accordance with the request contained in your letter of August 20, I am sending you enclosed our latest report received from Jerusalem. To this report there ought to be added a word regarding our Alexandria work.

As you may have heard, we were unfortunate enough to lose our nurse in Alexandria, Miss Rose Kaplan. We are about to replace her. Miss Ida Hoffman, a nurse of great experience, has consented to take up her work there.

In presenting this report, I hope you will call the attention of your audience to the fact that the suggestions made by Doctor Kagan and Doctor Ticho require more money than we are now receiving from our Chapters.

This morning I was in receipt of a very charming letter from Mrs. Eugene Sommer, who called my attention to the situation in Buffalo, which she thought warranted organizing activity on our part. I shall do what I can, though I must say to you, as I have said to Mrs. Sommer, that hitherto our efforts have been vain there. Even Miss Leona could not succeed in Buffalo. Mrs. Sommer asked me to let you know if we organize a Chapter in Buffalo. At present I can only say that we shall make the attempt.

With Zion's greetings, I am,

Yours very truly,

HS

Henrietta Szold

Rinder: so it was easy enough for me to arrange programs. I never took the presidency, for of course I was offered it a great many times, but I was interested in so many other things. I assure you I was there behind the scenes directing most of the activities. [Laughter]

At the end of two years, word came from national Hadassah, unfortunately, that Hadassah is definitely a Zionist organization, and certainly the presidents of Hadassah must be Zionists. Mrs. Sloss saw this letter and she said, "In that case, I have no right to be president."

Chall: This was when? What year do you think?

Rinder: In about 1918. We were concerned that if most of our members heard why Mrs. Sloss resigned, they would pull out of Hadassah and we'd have nothing. So we decided, a few of us, to disband. We thought that that would be the wiser thing to do because if we ever formed a chapter again we could call upon any of these women to rejoin. But if they left for ideological reasons, we could never get them again.

So Mr. Lowenthal and I invited Mrs. Sloss to lunch at the Palace Hotel. We put this before her. We suggested that we disband and we told her the reason. She saw the wisdom of it and she was perfectly willing to go along.

We sent a letter to the members stating that we find that for the time being, there is no need for an organization such as ours. We will retain a working committee and if Palestine should need our services in collecting clothes or linens, drug supplies, as they did every once in a while, this committee could act for them. And we disbanded. That was really very sad but it was the best thing to do.

Chall: You didn't really have any strong Zionists in the group.

Rinder: No, there were just a few of us. Those who were Zionists remained on this committee. There was Mrs. Louis Van Vliet , Mrs. Irving Lipsitch, Mrs. David Shapiro, Mrs. Harry Spiro, and Mrs. Harris Weinstock.

Chall: These were your Zionist leaders?

Rinder: Yes, they were.

Chall: Were they from Emanu-El?

Rinder: Oh yes, members of Emanu-El.

Chall: Mrs. Spiro?

Rinder: Oh Mrs. Harry Spiro, yes. This committee remained for several years until I felt it was time to reorganize. I don't remember dates but I'm almost certain it was 1922. I called a meeting at my home and we reorganized. It was at that time that Mrs. Harris was elected president. She was a wonderful worker. Under her presidency, the organization grew by leaps and bounds.

Chall: It knew what it was growing to?

Rinder: Oh, then it was Zionist definitely. The population of San Francisco had grown too. We had many newcomers who were more interested in Palestine and Zionism. There had been coming to the coast, as I told you, a great many leaders--Weitzmann and Sokolov and Stephen Wise. They all came and spoke.

There were great big gatherings at Dreamland Rink in those days, or at one of the temples or the large halls of the community. People began to be more interested, and they began to have sympathy for people who were escaping from Russia and Poland, some coming to America. They all needed help and many were going to go to Palestine. And so our Hadassah grew until today when we have seventeen hundred members. I think it's the largest organization in the city.

Chall: In the meantime of course, the Zionist organization was growing too. Mr. Lowenthal left, I understand, and Miss Elsie Shirpser took on his duties.

Rinder: Yes, for a time. She was his secretary while he was here. You remind me of things I'd quite forgotten.

Chall: Was she involved on an administrative basis for a long time with the Zionist organization?

Rinder: Yes, for quite a number of years.

Chall: One of the male leaders I have listed here is Leo Rabinowitz. Was he related to the Cantor?

Rinder: Yes, he's the oldest son of Cantor Rabinowitz. He was very active. He was a bachelor then and had plenty of time, and he used to meet them [the speakers] at the station and take them under his wing. He loved it.

Chall: Judge Golden.

Rinder: Oh Judge Isadore Golden--he was an outstanding Zionist in those days.

Rinder: Who else is mentioned?

Chall: Adolph Koshland.

Rinder: Possibly. I never worked with him.

Chall: I'm not absolutely certain of the accuracy of my sources but the name was there.* Dr. Henry Harris we talked about.

You mentioned Weitzmann's coming, and I read there was difficulty when he first came in 1924, in getting him a hearing in Temple Emanu-El because the Reform Jews were really not too much interested in him. He spoke at the Civic Auditorium to the largest Jewish audience ever assembled. Then he came in 1941 and he spoke at Temple Emanu-El, which I felt was rather interesting. By 1941, certain of the feelings in the congregation about Zionism, while they hadn't surfaced yet, must have been prevalent. Can you remember anything about these Weitzmann lectures?

Rinder: I'm sorry, but all I can recall is that he came and spoke to enthusiastic audiences.

Other Organizations

Chall: Is there more that you can tell me about the Zionist activities that you can recall?

Rinder: No, there really isn't. Of course, I joined the Council of Jewish Women and I was active there. I was on their board, and chairman of religion, which meant mainly that I gave the invocation at various functions. I was chairman of the Women's Division of the Jewish Welfare Fund one year.

Chall: What about your work with the Women's Guild? I understand you were quite active with the Women's Guild. Was that the Sisterhood?

Rinder: Our Temple Sisterhood, yes. Well, I'm on the board for life, of course, and I'm continually active whenever I'm called upon to do anything.

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*Michael Zarchin, Glimpses of Jewish Life in San Francisco, Second Edition, Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, Berkeley, pp. 222-223.

Writing Skits

Chall: You write skits.

Rinder: I write skits. I wrote a skit for the Women's Division of the Welfare Fund two years ago, "Our Crowd West."

Chall: When did you start writing skits?

Rinder: Oh, many years ago. I wrote a little skit when I first came. Mrs. Sloss' son Frank--he's now a grandfather--was one of the little boys out at the San Bruno Jewish Center. I wrote a little skit in New York when I worked at one of the settlement houses. And then I wrote this one here as soon as I came. If I had had to earn a living after I graduated from high school, I probably would have become a writer because in school, teachers were always reading or having me read my compositions aloud to the class. They always had some good comment to make on my papers. So I probably would have written. I used to write poetry--well, everybody writes poetry. But skits were my chief form of literary expression.

Chall: I thought it must have been over a long period of time because there's a line in "Our Crowd West" that reads, "We're going to have a skit today." Then somebody says, "I'll bet it's written by Rowie Rinder."

Rinder: Yes, I used to write for Hadassah. There was always a question, "Shall we serve fish or chicken?" And Mrs. Harris, who had hardly any Jewish background, was always for fish because it must be kosher. Hadassah should have fish. Any other organization can have whatever they pleased. So we had to have fish while she was president. People hated fish for some reason, or they didn't want fish when they went out and paid good money for lunch. So I once wrote a skit on that. It was hilarious. We had fun. We had more fun rehearsing it than actually giving it, you know.

Then I used to write skits on the style of Erskine Scott Woods' book called Heavenly Discourse. Have you ever read it?

Chall: No.

Rinder: It's supposed to take place in Heaven among the well-known characters. It lends itself marvelously, you see. I once wrote it for Reggie Goldstein, on one of her birthdays. Peter knocks on the door and says, "Lord, are you busy?" He says, "No, Peter, come right in. I'm just finishing this star." And He shows him the star and Peter says, "Why, it has six points." He says, "Yes, of course, it's the star of my people." Then Peter says, "Oh, you did really choose

Rinder: the Jews, didn't you?" And He says, "Of course, but don't tell the goyim."

Then He said, "What did you want to speak to me about?" Peter said, "It's Reggie's birthday today." "Oh yes, Reggie. How old is she?" "Sixty years." "Oh, she doesn't look it." St. Peter says, "No, she's a well-kept woman, so round and firm and fully packed." And she is, full and firm and fully packed, and so it goes on. It lends itself because if the Lord is talking about an individual, He can say almost anything about them and it's perfectly all right. [Laughter]

Chall: Where are those scripts?

Rinder: Oh, put away somewhere. I have them around. My husband used to save them.

The Browning Society

Chall: In this Hadassah paper that you gave me to read,* there's a woman of achievement citation and it's for you. It indicates that you had been a member of the Browning Society.

Rinder: Oh yes, up until recently. We read Browning and other poetry. Mrs. Sloss was the leader for a great many years. She led it although she wasn't necessarily president. She led the literary part of it and she proved an excellent and enthusiastic leader.

Chall: So with all your household duties, you managed to find time for your own activities and writing of plays and skits.

Rinder: They were written for occasions. I only wrote when I was commissioned to write. I never just wrote and said, "I have a skit, let's put it on." If they asked me to put on a program, sometimes I would say, "Shall I write a skit?" It was the easiest thing for me.

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*Kol Ami, August, 1963.

The Family

Mrs. Rinder's Role as the Cantor's Wife

Chall: I was interested in one line of Ellen's poem where she says about you, "Now Rowie I know would not regret it/If she got what she deserves, a little credit." [Laughter] I find it hard to believe that you were really in the background.

Rinder: When my husband was alive, I was in the background. I automatically kept in the background.

Chall: I think Ellen's poem has such a great deal of insight, but when I read this about Rowie in the background, I didn't think it could be possible. But I sense that your husband was the leader.

Rinder: Oh yes, he was the leader in everything. Also, I depended so much upon him in making decisions, that's why now I'm so lost; you know, I could never decide what to wear when we'd go out. He would sometimes mislead me. [Laughter] I once bought a red dress and he hated bright colors; he wasn't accustomed to seeing me in bright colors. Every time I put that red dress on, he'd say, "Haven't you anything else?" So I'd change into my old black dress. I finally gave that red dress away, never having worn it. I never wore that red dress and I never got another one. [Laughter]

Chall: Nowadays women wear red all their lives. There was a time when it wasn't done.

Vacations

Chall: When you got tired of all of this activity here and there continually, did you go off and take a rest?

Rinder: We did very frequently, much more so than later on because we needed it more when the children were young. There were some old friends here who wanted our company and would take us with them on their various trips. The first time we went to Peter Pan Lodge in Carmel as guests of Mrs. Alice Rosenberg. We went down to Santa Barbara as guests of Mrs. Wormser. The first time we went to Yosemite, we went as guests to the Awhanee with Miss Millie Oppenheim. It was always to the finest hotels. We were very fortunate that way.

Rinder: Otherwise we would run down to Saratoga or Carmel very frequently.

Chall: Did you drive down or were there other ways of getting there in those days?

Rinder: Friends would drive us or we took the train. We didn't have a car until we'd been married twelve years. Our weekends were very busy, so we never went for weekends.

Oh also, during the summer we rented furnished homes down on the Peninsula or in Marin County for two or three months every summer when the children were young. Before they went to school of course it was simple enough. Even after they started school and were in the lower grades, we could stay away for three months and get out of the fog. One month my husband would have a vacation and the rest he commuted. He didn't have to come in every day either. He only came in when there was occasion for it. So we were able to have nice long vacations.

Most often we went to a place a little beyond Palo Alto called Robley Ridge, where there's a group of homes in a very rural district. It's still rural. It's the only rural spot in this part of the world, I think. It's simply charming. And every house was delightful and we would rent one of these houses while the owners went abroad or had other homes somewhere.

Chall: That was nice. Then your children would get some country.

Rinder: Yes. In one place they had two horses; the children got to feed the horses early in the morning and later would go riding. There was a tennis court but no pool because in those days there weren't so many swimming pools as there are today. It was on three acres of land. We went to that house for a great many years. It was simply delightful, with fruits and vegetables growing, and flowers. It looked out on the Stanford hills.

Chall: In the summertime, you were out in the country so you wouldn't be coming in and the activities ceased a bit.

Rinder: We would drive in for services. By that time we had a car, of course. We would drive in for services when my husband's vacation ended. I would bring him in and bring him back. If he had to come in for any purpose, I would drive him to the station and he'd take a train up and a taxi from Third and Townsend.

Family Life

Chall: Did you have more time together as a family during the summer than you would during the winter with the children?

Rinder: Oh yes, decidely, because there was a time here especially in the twenties when the social life was very intensive and extensive. Just before the Depression. We went out practically every night of our lives. All dressed up--long dresses for the women and the men in tuxedos. Finally, in order to have some time with our children, we spent Friday night home as a family night. For many years--in fact, to the end of my husband's life--we never went out on Friday night. We'd have a service at the table, the Kiddush, and the kindling of the lights. We frequently had guests. But at any rate, we were with the children.

Chall: So you had to set aside one night of the week.

Rinder: Otherwise we'd be out every night. I tell you I felt like Cinderella. We'd go to these elegant homes.

Chall: How did your children react to growing up with such active and important parents?

Rinder: They accepted the situation favorably, I think. I recall no problems we couldn't meet, even during their adolescence.

My daughter, Meta, attended Stanford University where she was a straight A student. My son, Robert, chose the University of California where he majored in physics--working with Oppenheimer and other great physicists of that era. Robert graduated in three years instead of the usual four and was sent directly to Oak Ridge to help work out the A. bomb. Neither he, nor a great many others working with him knew exactly what they were creating. When he found out, Robert, disillusioned with physics, left and joined the civilian merchant marine until the Second World War was over. He then returned to college, taking a course in engineering. His work at present is with computers. He has a charming wife and two young sons and lives in Danbury, Connecticut.

Political Preferences

Chall: Did you and Cantor Rinder have any political party preferences, republican or democrat?

Rinder: We have always been democrats, and we thought Roosevelt quite fine. We resented the fact that he did nothing to help the German

Rinder: Jews. We admired Hoover at first. He was supposed to be educated and cultured and scholarly. Then came the Depression and nobody admired him. We voted for the man, but the democrats always seemed to have the preferable man. We considered ourselves liberal democrats.

Chall: Does that mean you voted for Al Smith, rather than Hoover?

Rinder: It seems hazy now but I think we voted for Hoover. We went to hear him speak at Stanford, and we went with Rabbi Newman. Because of Hoover's educated background, because he was supposed to have worked his way through school, and because Louis Newman was a great admirer of Hoover, I think we voted for Hoover.

Chall: I would assume that you voted for Truman?

Rinder: Yes. I came home and said, "I just threw out a vote." And then when the votes came in, it was the most amazing thing that ever happened!

Chall: What about Stevenson and Eisenhower?

Rinder: I voted for Stevenson, of course.

IX SUMMING UP

The Rabbis

Chall: Is it possible for you to say whom you might consider the most influential rabbi in these fifty-five years you've been so close to Temple Emanu-El?

Rinder: In what sense do you mean influential?

Chall: I would say probably influential in terms of Temple leadership, devotion from the community, inspiring the young, and the elders.

Rinder: Of course, Rabbi Meyer was quite influential. As I told you at the beginning, he had a following of young people who to this day have taken an active part in the community--I think more so than almost any other rabbi since. He had open house for them every Saturday afternoon. They would congregate and literally sit at his feet. I never was present but I assume what he told them was worthwhile, because it made very fine human beings of them. A handful are still here and still active.

After that, they changed so frequently it is hard to say. In other congregations, rabbis come and stay on for a generation or two.

Chall: Here, they've been staying for approximately seventeen years.

Rinder: Which is a generation really, isn't it?

Chall: Yes, in terms of the young growing into adulthood. Rabbi Newman was here only six or seven years, but the others were seventeen--Rabbi Reichert and Rabbi Fine.

Rinder: Rabbi Newman, in that brief span of seven years, had considerable influence. As I've said elsewhere, he was a great preacher, a devoted apostle of worthy causes and movements, as well as an ardent Zionist. He is remembered by many, and whenever any of these go East, they invariably make a beeline for his temple and Sabbath services, even as my husband and I always did.

Rabbi Reichert could have been of influence because he had a

Rinder: certain charm and people liked him very much. If he had cared sufficiently to be as active as he should have been, he might have influenced them to some extent--I wouldn't know.

Chall: Do you have any recollection of how the Temple membership grew under Rabbi Meyer and then under Rabbi Newman? Was there much growth during these times?

Rinder: Not too great. You see, the population of San Francisco didn't increase noticeably for many years. The Jewish population was quite static for a number of years. It was only after the Second World War when so many of the men came through here to go to the South Pacific. Soldiers, officers, they saw the city, they fell in love with it, and they all vowed to come back and I think they all did. [Laughter] Surely they had to because we began getting very crowded. The growth was gradual, not too noticeable, until after the War. I judge the steady growth prior to that by the fact that the number of confirmands didn't change much from year to year.

The greatest increase was when Rabbi Fine came in because the Temple membership and the Sunday School membership had dropped so that the growth was very noticeable--by leaps and bounds. Rabbi Fine influenced a great many people. We had huge Sunday School attendance during his tenure in office. The congregation grew; people loved him. He was a wonderful speaker. He would have had more influence had he put himself out to be influential, had he cared sufficiently.

Again, it isn't only one's ability, it's something within one that creates the influence and the contact. His aspiration was not to meet people and influence them in any way whatever. It's really unfortunate because he could have been an influence for good. He is a very fine human being, with great integrity and understanding. He's a sensitive person, a literate person, a fine background, a very articulate person, who has only to open his mouth and the beautiful words just flow. I know he had great influence on those of us who attended services regularly because we adored listening to him.

He was well known in the community because he sat on numerous committees and also because of his T.V. series, "Questions Please," of which I spoke before. He wasn't a pastor. He was the pulpiteer but not the pastor. We loved him then and we still do.

Chall: So in all these fifty-five years at Emanu-El, there have been only two pastoral types--if we want to call them that--Rabbi Meyer and Cantor Rinder.

Rinder: Yes. As it happens, he became a pastor, in a sense, of the community throughout these years. He cared and he had an empathy for people, and people felt it and responded to it. You can tell by the communications you've seen. They all invariably said the same thing: how much they owed to him, how much they got from him, and how devoted they were.

Chall: So that an institution like the Temple can exist for 120 years with a modicum of pastoral service.

Rinder: Yes, because it is the important and the outstanding institution in the community, mainly because the outstanding members of the community are members. That too helps make an institution important because the important people belong to it.

Chall: In one of the Temple bulletins is a notice that Rabbi Newman is going to speak on KFRC. Rabbi Reichert also did a considerable amount of broadcasting. Was it common for the Emanu-El rabbis to have radio programs?

Rinder: No, not necessarily. It was occasional and only if they had something to say, or if someone requested it. It wasn't a policy of the congregation ever.

Chall: There was then no weekly sermon or program of the local rabbi on the radio, as there have been of some churches?

Rinder: No, we didn't have that. Of course, Rabbi Fine was on that wonderful program, "Questions Please," with a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest, for a number of years. It was very popular in the community. Rabbi Fine, I think, became known more for that than as the rabbi by the community at large. But there was nothing, for instance, like this program that just went off, the Hebrew Union College program that had been on every Sunday morning for twenty-five years.

The Community Leaders

Chall: Who have been, over the years, the most important leaders? This won't be the definitive list because no person can give that, but those who come to mind in the last half century, who have given the Temple the kind of direction that has made it an important institution.

Rinder: In the community, you mean?

Chall: Well, in the Jewish community and the larger San Francisco community--those you've been able to count on all these years.

Rinder: As I think I've mentioned, those people who participated in musical events--Mr. Daniel Koshland heads the list every time; Mrs. Walter Haas; Mrs. Marcus Koshland, Daniel's mother.

Chall: Is this a family tradition, would you say?

Rinder: Possibly it is.

Chall: Mrs. Marcus Koshland was the original patron of the arts among the Koshlands.

Rinder: Yes. Mrs. Sigmund Stern was Mrs. Walter Haas' mother. Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter. Although Mrs. Koshland's daughter hasn't followed. She attends symphony and opera but she's not active. She's a different type person.

Mrs. M. C. Sloss, by all means. She was an outstanding member of the congregation and of the community, in music, in literature. For many years, she was on the radio discussing the symphony, week after week after week. She led the Browning Society for many years. She was a member of all the Jewish organizations, the founder of the San Francisco Council of Jewish Women. As I told you, she was also president of Hadassah for a short time. She was one of the founders of the Israeli Symphony Orchestra.

Chall: What kind of a person was she?

Rinder: A very dynamic, charming, delightful person. She hadn't had a college education but she'd been tutored a great deal. She was raised by an aunt in Boston but I don't know where she met Judge Sloss. I think she came out here as a bride. She immediately became a well-known member of the community.

The Council of Jewish Women was organized at Temple Emanu-El by Rabbi Voorsanger, if you please. He encouraged her to take the presidency. She was young and inexperienced and hesitated and refused at first, but finally consented. It became, throughout her life, the chief interest for her among all the organizations in which she was interested.

She was very generous with money, with gifts, extremely generous and wonderful, a patron of the arts and a patron of music. Her home was a center for important people, out of town visitors and people in the community, an outstanding person and very articulate.

Rinder: She was very much interested in everything in the world, a wonderful person.

Chall: She was a rather close friend of yours, wasn't she?

Rinder: She was considerably older, but she was very, very friendly and devoted to my husband. I hope she liked me too. We went to the opera with her and had dinner at her home. She lived at the Clift Hotel for many years before her death. We would have dinner there before the opera. Formerly, she lived in a very lovely duplex on Green Street. Always she lived very graciously and very beautifully.

Chall: What kind of person was Rosalie Stern? Was she as dynamic and active as Mrs. Sloss?

Rinder: No, not dynamic at all. But truly a grande dame, mistress of an elegant home, hostess to artists, musicians, dancers of note who came to San Francisco to perform. We met many of them there in the old days. She was besides a very handsome woman, charming, dignified, exquisitely gowned and coifed at all times.

Then there are the Zellerbachs. He was the president of the congregation and president of the Symphony Association for quite awhile. Of course, J. D. Zellerbach, his brother, who was our ambassador to Italy for many years, was a member of our congregation. While he didn't take an active part, he was really an outstanding member who lent prestige to our congregation merely by being a member.

Mrs. Sloss' son, Richard, was president of the congregation on two different occasions. He's a very charming, delightful, articulate person, who writes ditties for all occasions and very cleverly.

Both he and his brother Frank are devotees of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. They were raised at the time when the Gilbert and Sullivan days were at their height. So they know every opera by heart, and of course, their mother saw to it that they had every opportunity for intellectual advancement. They have not been too important a factor in the community but they've held their places.

It's an interesting thing when children have very dynamic and interesting parents. Their father was a judge and a quiet, gentle person; their mother was a very dynamic personality. Frequently, the children are left in the background and they never come up to the heights the parents have reached. Perhaps nature takes care of that because otherwise there'd be no end to this. [Laughter]

Chall: I think this is so, and you've probably had a chance to see it in

Chall: the community over the years.

Rinder: Oh yes, it's obvious, if you live here and watch these families.

I told you about the Hanukkah affairs we used to have at Mrs. Koshland's house. I can't think of any other names. Can you?

Chall: Did we talk about the Fleishhackers?

Rinder: Mr. Mortimer Fleishhacker, young Morty, Junior. Young--he's not as young as he once was, but I knew his parents, therefore, he's young. He was once president of the congregation. He and his wife were very faithful and loyal members. They attended services at the time regularly. He made a very fine president. He's a very fine person. But he hasn't taken a very active part in Jewish communal affairs since then, nor has she.

Chall: I noticed his name this morning, along with Richard Swig, as the chief fund raisers for ACT.

Rinder: Yes, in fact I got a communication. Maybe I ought to send something. I didn't attend any plays this year. The first two years I subscribed. And each year, I sent a contribution besides. I suppose I ought to because I'm in favor of it. I think it's a wonderful thing and we should have it.

Chall: That's why his name comes to mind this morning.

Rinder: The letter was signed by him. I didn't know Richard Swig was in on it.

I wish I could remember more names but there aren't any in any community that take so leading a part, in both Jewish and communal affairs, as those people did.

Chall: These names go back quite a way. Some of these people were active when you came to the community. Now it's a question of children and perhaps grandchildren.

Rinder: Some of them, yes.

Chall: So this is a family tradition of long standing.

Rinder: Richard Goldman and Rhoda Haas are very active in many things. She is the daughter of the Walter Haases. The Sintons are active. Edgar Sinton was a member of our board. The original name was Sinsheimer, and many of them have shortened it. There's one Sinsheimer left down in San Luis Obispo; they have a business down there. The family originated there and then they came up here.

Rinder: Our presidents have been people who have come from other congregations, as a matter of fact, and joined our congregation, as Sam Jacobs did. He was president of our congregation for a couple of years quite recently. He came from the Geary Street Synagogue, where Elliot Burstein is rabbi.

Judge Wollenberg was a president of our congregation. He's very well-known in the community. Dr. Rogers who was just recently president is married to Barbara Shainwald, a well-known family in the community, but they were not very active.

The present president, Reynold Colvin--his mother was Tillie Cohen, a president of Hadassah. I wish she had lived to see her son president of Emanu-El because at the time they were fairly Orthodox Jews, and this would have given her such pride and pleasure. Rennie is an attorney and a very able and fine president. Before Sam Jacobs, the presidents were more of the older members of the community.

You see how the picture changes all of a sudden. Louis Haas was president, he was a bachelor, just a businessman in the community and well-known, but not particularly active in any field of endeavor, other than the congregation and Old People's Home.

There are newcomers. The Luries, Louis and Robert, his son, are active. The Swigs are active. There are many newcomers to the community who have become active in community affairs.

An outstanding personality who is a comparative newcomer to San Francisco is Ben Swig. He came here from Boston about twenty years ago, moderately well-to-do. He purchased the Fairmont Hotel which was somewhat rundown but a handsome structure with a magnificent view on all sides. He proceeded to renovate and redecorate, especially the lobby, which is considered one of the handsomest in the country.

Almost immediately the hotel was a huge success. Within a few years, Ben Swig was a wealthy man with real estate and hotel holdings all over the country. Best of all, Ben has a warm, Jewish heart, and he soon began making generous contributions to numerous worthy causes, Jewish and non-Jewish, particularly to Israel. Wherever a need arises, there is Ben Swig ready to help.

Social and Communal Life

Chall: If some young bride were coming in, even, let's say, as the wife of a new cantor or even a new rabbi, would there be a considerable difference in the kind of Temple communal life, social life, and so forth, that she would find as compared to what you found?

Rinder: Oh, decidedly. You see, there is now, for instance, an entirely different type membership. There are more young people. People are more minded about sending their children to Sunday School than they were in those days. And once they want their children to belong, they join the Temple. So there are more young people whom she's likely to meet.

Also when I arrived, there was no Women's Guild. That was organized a number of years later. And so she automatically meets these people who are almost entirely young women, particularly those who sit on the board. She, as the wife of a rabbi or cantor, becomes a member of the board. And they begin to entertain each other and there she is. So the life is entirely different.

Besides, life is so much less formal than it was in those days. They all have the same problems. The new members are not quite as wealthy as they once were, although by and large it's leveled off so that many of them are better off than they were or might have been back in the old days. And also the salaries of the new rabbi and cantor are higher than they once were. So that there's a leveling off there and it's a more even relationship. It's a much more normal relationship than it was when I came here.

I look around and I marvel, it's so different, you just can't imagine. Life is so different it's almost impossible for you to appreciate the difference.

Chall: It's a half century and . . . .

Rinder: Yes. Who has a butler today? Who has a chauffeur today? Who has a whole box at the opera today? They take a seat in a box or two seats, for the most part, except the multi-millionaires whose families have gone down through the ages almost, retaining those boxes. I mean, it's entirely different.

Chall: In a sense, more egalitarian.

Rinder: Yes, undoubtedly.

Chall: Does it make for a change that many of these families live in the suburbs? Or am I incorrect in thinking that many of the present

Chall: young Jewish leaders live in the suburbs rather than in the city?

Rinder: It hasn't made much difference. Some of them have joined the temples outside of the city. There are two down on the Peninsula, northern and southern Peninsula. There's one in Marin County. And it's so much easier for the children to attend Sunday School there than to have them brought here, although some parents still continue to bring them. Not from the Peninsula so much. A few of them come over from Marin County.

But those who are active--the Koshlands live down on the Peninsula. They always have. When they were first married, they lived in Boston but they had to come back here because of business. Since then, they've lived down in Hillsborough. But that makes no difference. Mr. Koshland would never dream of joining any other congregation but ours. He comes for the Holidays and he can certainly come in for some special function. And his business is right here in town.

Chall: Do you think it would be possible today to build an edifice like Emanu-El?

Rinder: [Laughter] I doubt it. I don't think any congregation could afford it. It's one of the last. Of course, the Catholic Cathedral is going up costing millions and millions of dollars. But even their own members have objected to it. I don't think that our Jewish community would stand for it, nor could they afford to build anything like this. It cost only a couple million at the time, and it would be about ten million today, I think, to build anything like this.

Our Sunday School alone has five stories. I heard last night, for the first time, that the underpinnings are so vast that they could have, had they thought of it, had they known that this was going to become a nation on wheels, put in a garage sufficient to house all the automobiles belonging to the congregation. It is tremendous.

Then we have this wonderful room up there in the dome of the Temple [pointing out the window to the dome]. This is lit every time we have a service; we can see it from here, it's just huge. Can you imagine that room? A circular staircase leads up to it. I really ought to go once before I get too old. The windows encircle this room. Perhaps Chagall could do those also. Wouldn't that be beautiful?

Chall: Is Judaism, as you've seen it functioning, here to stay?

Rinder: Now look! [Laughter] I'm no prophet.

Chall: I was wondering about such things as intermarriage. Is there more intermarriage now than there was before, and intermarriage in which

Chall: there's not much concern about conversion?

Rinder: Yes, it goes on all the time. There's more, and none of us is shocked any longer, nor do the parents, certainly of our congregation, protest too strongly. If it happens to be a nice boy or girl, why, they're delighted. If they're of good background, good education, they accept it. And it happens all the time.

Yet Dr. and Mrs. Rogers' daughter, who had gone to Israel to live, is marrying an Israeli. They've never been Zionists. But she's marrying an Israeli and they're going to Israel for the wedding.

Chall: If you go to Israel at the right time, at a certain age, you're just likely to do that. Do you think of other changes in Jewish attitudes or observances which you've noted through the years? Do some strengthen, some weaken, the tradition?

Rinder: Since our "times are out of joint," the Jewish community has reacted as others have. Organized religion no longer has hold of the people as it once did. There has definitely been a falling off of attendance. Were it not for bar mitzvahs on Saturday mornings when family and friends attend, the Temple would be more than half empty--regardless of who the rabbi is or how well he preached.

I think the Jews' chief concern today is the survival of Israel. Peace there seems so far away--if it ever comes. If and when it does, the greatest nourishment to our spirits will come from Israel.

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